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## RELIGION AND MIRACLE



# RELIGION AND MIRACLE

BY

GEORGE A. GORDON

MINISTER OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH  
BOSTON



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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I dedicate this Book to the Inspiring  
Memory of my Father, GEORGE GORDON,  
of Inch, Scotland,—born and bred to  
the vocation of farmer: a brilliant mind,  
one of the bravest of men, to whom the  
order of summer and winter, seed-time  
and harvest was a token of the Infinite  
good-will, and who toiled in the Fields  
of Time in the sense of the Eternal.





## PREFACE

WHEN a teacher and preacher of the Christian religion moves from the circumference toward the heart of faith, miracles fall out of the sphere of his vision. He may not deny the reality of miracles, but more and more miracles cease to be significant for him. He is dealing with the Eternal as it shines by its own light, and in that case outward witness of any kind for the things of the soul becomes superfluous. For many years I have lived in this mood. Slowly miracles have ceased to serve me in the evolution of my belief, in the moral campaign of my spirit. For me the heart of the universe is God, the Eternal Spirit; the permanent force in man is the soul that answers to the Infinite soul; the incomparable genius of Christianity is in the way in which it enables human beings to live in the consciousness of our Father in Heaven. Christianity is, in my judgment, incomparable as the



religion of revelation and reconciliation; it brings spirit to light, the Divine and the human; it brings peace. The words of the great prophet of the exile describe with rare felicity the privilege of the Christian preacher: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"<sup>1</sup> It is said of Christ: "He came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father."<sup>2</sup> For the great apostle to the nations the gospel became essentially one thing, the gospel of reconciliation. Into these divine depths in Christianity, the supreme religion of the spirit, all devout and happy disciples of the Master and preachers of his message at length come.

Sharing in this universal discipline of honest and advancing souls, it never occurred to me to write anything upon the subject of re-

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lii, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians ii, 17-18.

ligion and miracle. I had for many years dwelt in a sphere far removed from outward signs and wonders; I had, therefore, quietly ceased to regard the tradition of signs and wonders that accompanied the Lord. One day, however, I fell into conversation with a company of young ministers; I found them greatly troubled. They felt that as honest men they could not say that they believed in miracles; and that incapacity created suspicion as to how much of the gospel remains when the miracles are set aside.

This question I was invited to discuss at our Boston Ministers' Meeting two or three years ago, and the response which I then received, alike from men of conservative opinions and from men of radical views, led me to reconsider the whole subject. At the same time there came the invitation to lecture on the Nathaniel W. Taylor Foundation in Yale University. In this way the little volume now published came into existence.

I am unwilling that any one who may look into this volume should fail to grasp my pur-

pose in writing it. I have no interest in the destruction of the belief in miracle. I am concerned to show that where miracle has ceased to be regarded as true, Christianity remains in its essence entire; that the fortune of religion is not to be identified with the fortune of miracle; that the message of Jesus Christ to the world is independent of miracle, lives by its own reality and worth, self-evidencing and self-attesting. If it shall be allowed by fair-minded men that I have made even a slight contribution toward the final emancipation of the fundamental beliefs of Christian men from the cycle of signs and wonders, and from the fate that with the advance of science seems to threaten the entire tradition of miracle, I shall be satisfied. I conceive myself to be a genuine conservative; I am conscious that I work for the preservation of essential historic Christianity; I consider myself to be, to the extent of my power, a defender of the eternal gospel. I regard the vision of God and of human existence, embodied in the message and person of Jesus Christ, as the most precious posses-

sion of mankind; and I should be glad to make it impossible for those who are unable to agree with me in the discussion that follows to misunderstand me here.

GEORGE A. GORDON.

OLD SOUTH PARSONAGE, BOSTON,  
June 19, 1909.



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# RELIGION AND MIRACLE

## CHAPTER I

### THE ISSUE DEFINED

#### I

**M**Y first word must be one of thanks for the honor done me by Yale University in inviting me to lecture on the Nathaniel W. Taylor Foundation. It is one of many similar privileges and distinctions that I have received during the last twenty years from the same honored source. My association with Yale University, while of little moment to her, has been one of the highest satisfactions of my life. I should take more pleasure in this new honor if it did not bring me face to face with a grave responsibility. He must be wanting in moral sensibility who faces this lectureship without serious misgiving. For it must be remembered that Dr. Taylor is a great historic



figure in the evolution of the New England theology. Indeed, no small part of the felicity of this Foundation is in doing something to rescue a great and brilliant name from the oblivion that lies in wait for all save the sublime remnant of the servants of God. Too readily does the generation in power consent to this robbery of time; too easily does it take for granted the inevitableness of this erasure of shining names from the memory of the living. While there are a few names that the world cannot forget, so deeply are they engraved on its heart, there are many whom it behooves the world not to forget. Noble men recognize as part of their duty to their time this recollection of famous lives; to this end they enter into a humane conspiracy to defeat the second death to which every servant of truth and righteousness is exposed.

It would be something of a reproach if we who honor the great and difficult science of theology should lightly cease to regard so eminent a master of that science as Nathaniel W. Taylor. Here was a man of capacious and

brilliant intellect, lifted by long and severe discipline to the temper and efficiency of a Damascus blade. Among worthy objects of admiration, educated men will always give a high place to the powerful and splendid intellect. To be admitted to the study of a mind of this order, to gain some sense of its range and efficiency, to come under the fascination of its movement and power, is one of the greatest educational forces known to man. There is no surer way of gaining in intellectual strength and integrity than by joining ourselves, in critical homage, to the great historic masters of our particular discipline. Admiration for Dr. Taylor is well founded, and in the rushing extempore world into which we have come, with its too frequent affluence of words and its poverty of ideas, — and where ideas do exist, their crudity and confusion, — familiarity with the premeditation, plan, order, precision, sequence, vigor, and rigor of this master must issue in good and in good only to the enthusiastic and wise student.

Nor must we overlook the greatness of

Dr. Taylor's theological interest. His central thought was the moral government of the world. He does not conceive and shape his subject as we should like him to do; his method of treatment does not always commend itself to the sense of science and history that to-day controls the scholar and thinker; his work in many ways is a disappointment; yet when all this has been said, and said with emphasis, it still remains clear and incontestable that Dr. Taylor gave his life to the service of one of the deepest and most momentous interests of the human mind, — the moral order of the world, the moral character of the universe.

Here again, therefore, we recall his name with honor, and under the inspiration of his illustrious example we turn from the lighter concerns of faith to the greater, from the trivial to the eternal. In raising the issue as to the relation of religion to miracle, I may assuredly count upon the favor of his valiant and free spirit; in declaring that religion stands on its own feet, lives by its own might,

I may further count upon his sympathy; in asserting that religion is independent of miracle, I may claim his eager and benign interest if I cannot be sure of his consent. In any event, my discussion is in the freedom of the spirit which is our most precious inheritance from all the greater masters of the New England divinity. They were stern men, whose hearts grew sick over every "mush of concessions," who hated unreality under every disguise, who reserved for the pretentious but vacant mind a noble contempt, and who exacted of the thinker in freedom nothing but honest work done in the solemn sense of accountability to God and man.

I may as well begin my discussion of religion and miracle by telling you the upshot of it all. Many persons will not start seriously to read a romance till they have glanced through the final chapters and are sure that the issues of the plot are satisfactory. John Henry Newman, an adept in argument, used to remark that one can convince men by logic when one can shoot round corners; and while

this statement is a manifest exaggeration, it nevertheless reveals the liquid prejudice in which the minds of most men float. There is apt to be a bias in the mind, and men with a bias will dispute an axiom when it points the wrong way, like the farmer who said he would not admit that twice two are four till he saw what use his antagonist intended to make of the admission. A friend told me that he took the greatest delight in reading over and over again the account of certain battles whose issue was completely satisfactory to him. The battles of Marathon, Arbela, Cannæ, Pharsalia, Waterloo, and Gettysburg were a perpetual treat to him because he knew what was coming and liked it. I fear this is the mood in which multitudes of men follow a course of argument. If they know the issue and like it, then the reasoning is a delight; if they know the conclusion and dislike it, the argument is undone.

The issue of my argument is such as to commend itself to all sensible and good men. I am not concerned with the destruction of

belief in miracle ; my purpose is not to prove or discuss the unreality of miracle. I do not touch this vast wonder-world except incidentally in a few preliminary observations. My plea is not against miracle, but against the identification of the fortune of religion with the fortune of miracle. My contention is in behalf of the Christian religion in its essence. The Christian religion is the vision of the Eternal moral order and the vision of the Eternal grace in that order: these two visions are living forces in Jesus Christ; from him they go forth to work through all human history, to meet and overcome the vision of sin and death. I maintain that the solution of all our graver difficulties is through profounder living in God. The genius of religion is forever revealed in these sovereign words:—

The Eternal God is thy dwelling place,  
And underneath are the everlasting arms.

More and more we return to the apostolic declaration that in him we live and move and have our being; above all, we seek in the

school of Christ the moral sincerity that issues in the vision of God. With this announcement of purpose, and with this anticipation of my conclusion, I ask you to "hear me for my cause."

## II

Two things, and two things only, are absolutely essential to religion in its highest form, to the Christian religion, — the sense of the fatherly love of God, and the answering sense on man's part of filial love and obedience. The Christian religion as it stands in the consciousness of its Founder is his sense of the perfect fatherly love of God and the answer to this of the filial love and obedience of his own soul. In the disciples of Jesus the same double consciousness exists. There is the consciousness of the infinite compassionate love of the Father in heaven, and there is the answering consciousness of the human spirit in its ideals, purposes, and struggles. To this central consciousness, with its Divine and human aspects, Jesus remains the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the example of the way in which

men come to know God as Father and themselves as sons of God — the vision of the universe through what is highest in the soul, the acceptance of the verdict of the spirit as to the value of man's life. Jesus is the example of the truth ; he is the union in perfect clearness and peace of the consciousness of God as Father and the consciousness of man as the son of God. He is the example of the life ; he is the life of victorious justice, purity, pity, and sacrifice which flows from the truth. The uniqueness of Jesus is here as Way, as Truth, and as Life ; and this uniqueness in fact is presented for interpretation to the philosophic mind.

From the personal sense of God and of the soul as his child, made effectual and happy in the presence of the great authentic Master, the free mind ranges far and wide, seeking intimations of the ultimate character of the universe and the essential nature of man. From the centre of light and peace it travels to the far circumference where twilight and night appear. The result is that the universe



becomes the form of the Eternal. This formal universe is two-fold, — cosmic and human, — and the cosmos is the vast stage on which is enacted the divine tragedy of human history.

This simple and self-sustaining conception of religion relates itself necessarily to other human interests. It embodies itself in an institution, that is, it becomes a church ; it becomes a special vocation, calling into existence the prophet and his great ministry ; it becomes a creed, that is, it relates itself to the philosophy of religion, and to the general philosophy of the world. It relates itself to nature and raises the question : In what way does nature become the servant of religion, through portent, miracle, signs, and wonders, or through a steadfast and inviolable order ? It is with this last relation of religion that we are now concerned, — its relation to nature and to nature under the conception of miracle and under that of law.

The reality of miracle has been under suspicion among educated minds in all ages. The denial of the reality of miracle is nothing new

under the sun. For the Greek at his maturity the universe was a cosmos, an invariable order, the object of scientific study and confidence. In the scientific activity of Aristotle we do not meet with miracle. Portents may puzzle and interrupt the thinker, but they in no way disturb his confidence in the general order of cause and effect. For Spinoza miracles have no more worth than they possess for Hume. These examples suggest an unbroken succession of thinkers from the earliest times to our own day to whom miracle has been no part of our historic world. If, therefore, the suspicion of miracle that to-day works in so many minds were nothing but a new version of an old feeling, if it came from the same quarter from which this feeling has come in every generation since men began to think, it would not be of so much moment. For hitherto the suspicion of the reality of miracle has come largely from thinkers outside the pale of organized Christianity. Their conclusions were part of their philosophy of the world ; as their philosophy was foreign, so their conclusions

respecting miracles were foreign, to the faith of the Christian church.

The significance of the new question concerning miracle is that it comes from profoundly religious men, and from men living and potent within the Christian church. It is a new discussion that we face when the disciples of Jesus Christ in this twentieth century ask, Is miracle essential to religion? Is miracle a genuine part of the authentic record of any true religion? Is the essential truth of Christianity dependent upon the reality of the miracles embedded in the evangelical history? Is the message of Jesus Christ to man separable from the record of signs and wonders with which it is accompanied? Scientific men, in so far as they are under the scientific spirit, see no miracles, that is, they note no violations of the order of cause and effect; they expect to meet with no violations of this order; they believe in none. For them the miracles of all the religions are the interesting products of human imagination; they are a chapter in the serious fiction of the world. May

a member of the Christian church, may a preacher of the Christian gospel, in any degree sympathize with the attitude of scientific men toward miracle, and yet remain loyal to his great Master? These are questions working to-day in the religious mind wherever that mind has obtained a modern education. These questions finally reduce themselves to three: Under what conception of the universe do educated freemen think to-day? What is the logical value of this conception? How far does the principle of verification lead us in this discussion?

### III

Our first question then is, Under what conception of the universe do educated freemen think in our day? It is not enough to answer, Under the conception of law. There has been in the world from the earliest time the idea of fate. It lives in some of the oldest of religions, as in the Karma of Buddhism, transfigured, indeed, by its ethical import. In Greek religion the Fates, Clotho, Lacheis, and Atropos, were the daughters of Themis, the supreme

Fate, upon which the throne of Zeus was built. The idea of fate has been wrought into a thousand poetic forms, from the Sophoclean drama to the great poem of Lucretius, from Omar Khayyám to the "City of Dreadful Night." It has been the leading idea in many imposing systems of thought in our modern world; it is the leading idea in the work of Spinoza, Calvin, and Spencer. Indeed, it may be said that whenever thinkers have come under the exclusive sway of the idea of the One, they have regarded the world of the many as its fated expression. Both in religion and in philosophy, from the earliest time, this has taken place. When men become enamored of the One, the Whole, the Eternal, they treat without mercy the finite world of persons and their acts, their character, their fortunes. Here we have the conception of an invariable order arrived at by speculation and then carried down to the last detail of existence either by the poetic imagination, as in the case of Lucretius, or by the steps of deductive logic, as in the ethics of Spinoza. In a sense Pro-

testants have been bred under this aspect of the universe. Predestination is a governing idea in Paul, and this apostle is the patron thinker of the Reformers. Predestination in Paul is turning out to be, under free study, a doctrine of hope for the whole race ; still, as set forth by John Calvin, his great disciple in the sixteenth century, it had all the hardness and horror of fate. For, according to Melancthon, who was a good judge, Calvin and Zeno teach the same doctrine. Life under this fatalistic idea of things has been a stern discipline. It has prepared us to look any system of opinion in the face without fear. The necessity laid upon us was by no means benign ; it was laid upon us by deductive thought and by the poetic imagination.

The sense of order in nature was strong among the science-loving Greeks. Their greatest thinker united the capacity for the widest generalizations with the keenest interest in the concrete world of man. Aristotle speaks for the higher mind of his race when he says : “ From the facts of the case, Nature does not

appear to be incoherent like a badly planned tragedy!"<sup>1</sup> Here is the emergence of the scientific conception of the invariable order of nature. It may be in some respects very much like the speculative conception, but it is unlike it in two important particulars. It is arrived at not by deduction, but by induction; it is in consequence a sure possession of the human mind. Consider for a moment these two particulars. From exact experimental study in chemistry, physics, botany, biology, physiology, psychology, the natural, ethical, and political history of man, the idea of order, which is the presupposition of all science, has risen up verified, attested. Here is a contrast to the old method whereby the sense of fate was fixed in human society. Predestination is not proved by induction; fate is a doctrine that has not been established inductively. The method of science is from facts and their observed behavior to laws and their invariable operation; the method of predestination and fatalism has been from the most general ideas

<sup>1</sup> *Meta.* M. 4.

of the human mind down to the facts that are crushed under those ideas, and that are not allowed to tell their own story. Jesus noting the fallen sparrow and thence traveling to the Universal mind, and Newton seeing the falling apple and moving to the apprehension of a universal law, illustrate in a supreme way, in religion and in cosmic study, the scientific spirit. The method is from fact to law, from life to the Supreme life. If it be said that the history of Jesus is the reverse of this method, that in him we have a descent from the Eternal to an individual life in the fields of time, the reply is that this is indeed the history of all reality, cosmic and human. Creation is the movement of the Infinite forth from himself into the particular worlds of space and time. It is therefore true of all life, of all creation, of all human beings, including Jesus Christ, that the history of reality is from the eternal to the temporal. But the history of the way in which man traces the cosmos to its final meaning, the history of the way in which man moves to the knowledge of himself as of con-



cern to the Infinite, is from fact to law, from living soul to the living God. The descent of Jesus Christ into time was availing only as it became in his self-conscious soul an ascent back to God. The fullness of his self-consciousness at the Baptism would seem to mean this. Over the path in which God had descended into his soul he ascended into the soul of God. If the method of creation be a deduction from the Infinite life to the finite, the method of sure human knowledge is the reversal of that method. It is an induction from fact to principle, from particular to universal, from man to God.

This contrast in method by which speculation and scientific thought arrive at the idea of a universal order issues in another contrast of even greater moment. Of the old speculative idea of fate it is possible to say that it is a thing in the air; that it is in a region where the human intellect is incompetent; that it is a mere dream when set against the facts of man's life. Professor Park used to recall to his students the New England farmer who

got into a puzzle over his endeavor to outwit the Infinite and to take that one of the two roads home from the mill over which God had not predestined him to go, and who took himself out of this puzzle by the wholesome confession, "God decreed that I should be a fool." The grip of an idea that rises up out of fact cannot thus be undone. When an invariable order of sequence rises up out of the exact research of mankind, when this order is established by an induction as wide as that covered by exact research, the conception attained cannot be abandoned at will or overthrown by the agnostic sentiment. It abides as part of the surest possessions of the human mind. The idea of the fixed order of nature is indeed an assumption; it is an assumption to which man is incapable of giving universal and absolute verification; still, this assumption receives verification and no contradiction over the entire field of contemporary science. So far it is as sure as anything human can well be.

The conception of the fixedness of the natu-

ral order is to-day dominant among freemen. Where men think and think freely they are inclined to rest in the universal and invariable reign of law. In the heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth cause and effect rule with absolute authority. There are no effects without causes; like effects come from like causes. In the realm of nature this order is constant and inviolable. We can predict the coming of a storm, but we cannot avert it. We can record the advent of spring, but we can neither hasten nor arrest that advent. This view of the world which comes to us in a poetic way in the order of sunrise and sunset, the succession of day and night, the ebb and flow of the tides, the procession of the seasons, the movement of the planets, the coming and going of the great familiar constellations, science has extended through the entire domain of physical being, so far as that being is known.

Man's life as a physical being is under the same law. Life comes from life; man is born of human parents. So fixed is this law that

any other mode of bringing human life into the world does not even occur to a sane mind. Further, cause and effect are seen in all physical disorders, in all normal waste and repair, in the entire process of bodily life, and in death. It is natural to be born, to grow, to attain life's prime, to decrease in strength, to fail and die.

The days of our years are threescore years and ten,  
Or even by reason of strength fourscore years;  
Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow;  
For it is soon gone, and we fly away.

What is this but the matchless poetic expression of the ageless and inviolable law that reigns in our physical existence? We marvel when Mr. Gladstone at the age of sixty-nine conducts one of the greatest political campaigns in the nineteenth century, dominating the mind of the nation like a king; we marvel again when at the age of eighty-four he continues the efficient head of the British government, but we do not expect him, on account of these feats, to live forever. We are confident of the reverse.

The mind and character of man are not exempt from law. The mind is conditioned by the general bodily health ; it is especially conditioned by the brain. All this is commonplace, and the commonplace means the adjustment of the habits of our thought to the reign of law. We claim, indeed, the power of free initiative of the will. We see in the depths of the spirit genuine creative power, but the boldest champion of the freedom of human spirit must recognize that in the sphere of character, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Wherever science has gone it has found that things come to pass in a given way ; that they do not come to pass in any other way. The scientific mind naturally believes that if we knew all nature and all history, we should behold all things coming to pass in one way, and this one way invariable and inviolable.

This scientific view of the world is the ultimate source of the discredit that has fallen upon the miracles recorded in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Christian scholars

have never, in large numbers, at least in modern times, believed in the miracles recorded in connection with other religions. They have rejected these miracles on many grounds, but chiefly because the order of the world is against them. Within a generation of human life this law of logic has been applied to the records of our own faith over its entire field, and with relentless vigor. Independent scholars, often enough with little religion of any kind, and frequently without discernible sympathy with the Hebrew or the Christian religion, have examined, in the scientific spirit, our Bible, and at every step they have found the record of miracles mythical or legendary, always incredible as fact. The point to be noted is that these scholars go to their work of criticism with a fixed conception of what can be and of what cannot be. They believe that miracles do not occur, that they never have occurred, that they never will occur. They believe this in the name of natural science ; they look, therefore, from the first contact with them, upon all stories of the miraculous as incredible and impos-

sible. In their hands, the fate of the miraculous is a foregone conclusion ; the miraculous goes as the landslide goes, it falls as the avalanche falls ; in the order of nature it could not be otherwise.

We see at once that this type of mind is full of peril. We see at once that it begs the question at issue. Judgment is set, and the miraculous is ruled out of court. The question is not discussed, it is assumed as settled. A general phase of belief concerning nature, resting indeed upon a wide induction of facts, has been asserting itself for centuries. It has been gaining ground ; it has won, or thinks it has won, the day. Miracles have gone because the fashion of the world's intellect is against them. This fashion may be right, or it may be wrong. Discussion alone can settle that point, and for the present defense of the miraculous is considered either an impertinence or an amusement ; it is further regarded as the infallible sign of an uneducated intellect. For this very reason the temper of the time is unfortunate.

It is unfortunate for another reason. Human science is strictly contemporaneous. It lives in verified conceptions; and verification is a process carried on by the living. Human science is contemporaneous, and its field is small at that. With all possible reverence for the high method and the sure results of science, one may doubt whether it is safe for any man to decide beforehand what the events of all history or any part of it must be, what the possibilities and impossibilities are over the entire domain of universal experience. Laws of logic hold against men of faith; they hold also against men of science. If things are believed that are more than doubtful, things are denied where the denial cannot be proved. There are ten thousand mysteries above, beneath, and round about the clearest and surest science. The fountains of being are deep; many of them are so far past finding out; and a new face may be put upon an ancient faith by some sudden disclosure of the law of man's soul. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our



philosophy. And while it is true that one who speaks in this way is but a voice crying in the wilderness, it is right, if only on the principle that a persistent opposition, a Sanballat, a Satan, is indispensable to all sure progress, that the solitary voice should keep up the cry. Intellectual integrity is the condition of the integrity of knowledge ; and intellectual integrity belongs, as matter of course, to no class of thinkers. When the custom of thought is all one way, there is safety only in the persistent challenge of the custom.

#### IV

We ask, therefore, as our next question : What is the logical value of the scientific conception of nature ? And here the first thing to be said is that antecedent to experience one thing may as well be as another. The " Arabian Nights " do not strike the minds of children as impossible stories. Indeed, to such minds they read like veritable history. The magic feats of Aladdin's lamp meet with little or no unbelief, because little or no authentic

experience is brought to the story. The immature mind does not know what to expect; one thing is therefore as credible as another, provided it be told with equal vividness and power; a magical universe is as likely to be the fact, to a vacant mind, as a universe severe and steadfast in its ways of behavior. If the cosmos be supposed to be the expression of mind, antecedent to experience, the magical and the ordered cosmos do not indeed stand upon the same level. Upon reflection the cosmic mind is not so likely to be a wizard as a logician, a lover of surprises as a lover of order. The cosmic mind is likely to care for something, and if so to observe certain rules in guarding the interests of that something. Order would seem to be essential to mind; to the good mind it is without doubt essential. If, therefore, the cosmic mind is a good mind, it goes without saying that even antecedent to experience order is more likely to be its general method of expression. So much must be said in qualification of the statement to be made that before the determinations of

experience order or disorder, law or magic, method or madness, may be the fact. Experience comes in to help the mind in its expectations; experience tells us what is, and upon what is we infer what has been, we predict what will be. We find that fire burns, that water at a certain temperature becomes ice, that in our latitude there are in the year an equal number of days and nights of unequal lengths, and from this experience we infer that such has been the case always, we predict that this order will remain to the end of time. The uniformity of nature is an assumption from partial experience for all experience actual and possible.

The uniformity of nature is an assumption. It is an assumption to which man is incapable of giving complete verification. Verification, it must be observed, is made by the living; when the verifications of preceding generations of men are taken, they are taken on authority; even when these verifications of men in past ages are re-verified by the living, in strict logic we are not able to say that former

generations were exact in their method and result. Only the Infinite mind knows whether or not the assumption of the uniformity of nature is valid. The mind that would sufficiently attest the idea of uniformity must know absolutely the entire history of the cosmos in relation to man, must know, too, the law that insures, for all time to come, an inviolable order. Scientific thinkers of eminence recognize fully that the uniformity of nature is an assumption to which man is incapable of giving complete attestation. Dogmatic denial of miracle on the ground of natural law cannot, therefore, be justified by logic. No man knows enough to be able to make good the denial. No man knows enough to be warranted in the statement that miracle has never occurred in the history of man and the cosmos. Therefore the dogmatic negative is excluded from sure thinking and valid conclusions on this subject.

Still it must be added that the uniformity of nature is a reasonable assumption. It is reasonable because ordinary experience justifies

it, ordinary mortals find the ways of nature invariable and sure. We take a walk in the country and find essentially the same conditions — a stable earth, air that may be breathed. Mining, farming, navigation, all forms of industry depend upon order in nature, and they find that order sure. The cultivation of the farm is set in the great uniform method of nature; the heart of the earth opens its treasure under the operation of law. The sea amid all its wild changes serves the navigator with a constant character. Ordinary experience is a record of the uniform ways of the great world in which we live, and upon these uniform ways we build and rejoice. Science takes this result of ordinary experience and verifies it by observation and experiment over the entire domain of exact knowledge; so far as science goes, it finds nature uniform in its behavior. Since this conception of the uniformity of nature is uncontradicted over the entire field of experiment, both ordinary and scientific, it is reasonable to believe that it is an uncontradicted conception over the whole range of cos-

mic history in relation to man. This belief about the uniformity of nature is reasonable, but it is not certain. We are led by contemporaneous experience to believe in the invariable order of nature for all experience, but we cannot prove that absolute, invariable order.

The antecedent improbability of miracle reduces itself to the contest between general experience and special experience. Quantity is surely against miracle. Is the quality of experience likewise against miracle? Here men will differ in their judgment. The testimony of the eye-witness of the miracles recorded in the Gospels will seem to some superior, to other judges inferior, to the general testimony of mankind. The persons who deem the testimony of the apostles of Jesus superior to the general verdict, or who hold that the testimony is superior when taken in connection with the character of the Prophet of whom it bears witness, are usually men who believe in the flexibility of nature. Usually they are persons with a slight sense of natural law and a high sense of the Supreme Being whose will is

expressed in natural law. These persons allow ideas to influence evidence; they hold that nature may be moved by the will of God or by the ambassador of God as the curtain is swayed by the wind, that nature may be inclined this way or that as the sail is bent by the breeze. Minds of this order are less influenced by the testimony of the New Testament record than by their own ideas. For them the miraculous has an extreme fascination, a weird and divine attraction. The miraculous world is God's world; he is the God of signs and wonders; religion itself is a portent, and it is set in with portents, cosmic and psychic. The essence of existence, the essence of history is surprise; God himself is the supreme surprise, and he is forever taking the world by surprise.

To minds of a sober cast all this seems painfully unreal. It represents not the work of serious judgment, but the riot of an irresponsible imagination. To minds possessed with a profound sense of natural law, who look upon natural law as the steady and sure

declaration of the will of God, the miraculous is an intrusion if not an impertinence. It is to them the beginning of confusion. It is the initial endeavor toward the transformation of the sublime and fixed world through which God covenants with men into the world of magic. Therefore the testimony of the disciples of Jesus to the miracles recorded in the Gospels meets, in such minds, a rooted antagonism. To them no testimony can prevail against an order that living men have never known to be violated. The result to which we are thus brought is that, while the denial of miracles cannot be logically sustained, the reality of miracles is unlikely. Miracles are logical possibilities and natural improbabilities.

## v

This brings me to the third question: What help may we expect from the principle of verification in the endeavor to ascertain the truth of our historic Christianity? Here it must be said that our historic faith divides itself into two great departments, — the verifi-



able and the unverifiable. This broad distinction between that in our faith which is verifiable and that which is not open to verification will be generally admitted as sound. We do not put in the same category the statement that Jesus at the wedding in Cana of Galilee turned water into wine and his great words, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>1</sup> The statement about the turning of the water into wine we cannot verify; if we believe it, we do so on the authority of the Fourth Gospel. The statement that Jesus is the light of the world, and that whoever follows him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life, is open to verification. Experience alone can determine whether the statement is or is not true. There can be, therefore, no difference of opinion concerning the validity of the distinction between the verifiable and the unverifiable in our Christian faith; there will be some difference of opinion concerning what should be placed in the one category and what

<sup>1</sup> John viii, 12.

should be placed in the other. It may not be always easy to determine what is and what is not open to verification.

It does not follow that what is unverifiable is therefore untrue. All that follows is simply this, that where a belief is not open to verification we cannot hope to gain any measure of certainty about its truth. For example, let us take this statement from the Fourth Gospel:<sup>1</sup> "Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well." It seems to me quite impossible from this statement to know how Jesus sat or where he sat. The statement is too indefinite for definite and sure belief; then again if it had been definite, we could have arrived at no certainty regarding it, because it is inaccessible to sure tests. It may be said that it is of no consequence how or where he sat, his conversation with the woman at the well is the essential thing. I agree to this, but I must add that precisely the same ground may be taken with regard to all in the life of Jesus and all in our historic faith that is not subject to verifica-

<sup>1</sup> John iv, 6.

tion. Still I repeat that because a belief is unverifiable it does not follow that it is untrue ; it only follows that we cannot be sure about it.

It is not necessary that belief should be limited to the verifiable. Luther thought that Apollos wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, and others have entertained the same opinion. There is no reason why a scholar should not entertain this opinion if he sees fit. Still, if he is a sane scholar, we expect him to admit that his belief is among the things that cannot be verified, that Origen is on safe ground when he affirms that God alone knows who wrote the Epistle in question. This line of reasoning holds over the entire field of Biblical history. The reconstruction of the history of Israel in modern scholarship has so much to say for itself that we accept it as probably true. It is more likely to be true than the traditional view ; and where the exact state of the case can never be surely known, probabilities count. In historical investigation probability is the guide to life ; and yet the result attained is a belief founded indeed upon evidence, but

unverifiable in the nature of the case. It is unlikely that Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote the exilic prophecy contained in chapters forty to sixty-six inclusive. It is far more likely that another prophet wrote the larger part of these prophetic words; but again certainty is out of the question. When it comes to Cheyne's method of cutting up Isaiah into a pack of cards, and coloring the cards according to the periods in which they originated, scholarship has foresworn science and taken up the trick of the juggler. I admit that the juggler has his rights so long as he admits the purely subjective value of his feats.

The fact is, among all men, belief extends far into the region of the unverifiable. Nothing can be said against this extension even in its wildest form so long as it is clearly understood to be what it is, a guess, a divination with the world for or against it. Still less should we object when the scholar works in this vast region of the strictly unverifiable by rigorous scientific method. Let him gather all available facts; let him sift and test his facts

by every known scientific device ; let him reason from them in logical order, and let him state his conclusion with all the strength allowed by the probabilities of the case, and we shall thank him. He has not given us certainty because in the nature of the case that is impossible. He has given us a likely, a probable, and a fruitful result, and we are thankful for so much.

While it does not follow that the unverifiable is untrue, or that belief should be limited to the verifiable, it is clear that the unverifiable can never remain an essential part of a reasonable faith. Therefore it is unreasonable when men impose upon one another in one undistinguishable mass both that which is open to verification and that which is not. Such a crude compound is the traditional orthodoxy of the world. What a man holds by the dead strength of mere belief is as far as the east is from the west from that which he holds as verified in the life of his spirit. We conclude, therefore, that all in the life of Jesus and his apostles that is open to verification

to-day stands in an entirely different category from all in his career and in that of his apostles which cannot be tested here and now in the courses of experience. I contend that a reasonable faith will note this distinction and build upon it. I contend that a reasonable faith will put small stress upon the unverifiable, and that it will stake its life upon the verifiable and sure.

History has two sides, one factual, the other ideal. In regard to these two sides of history we ask two distinct and different questions. In regard to facts we ask, Did they occur? In regard to ideas we ask, Are they true? The alleged facts of history are of two kinds — natural and miraculous. Even where the alleged facts are natural, scholars are often unable to arrive at an affirmative conclusion respecting them. Whether the migration of Abraham is fact or legend, whether Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are historical or mythical persons, are questions that many scholars find themselves unable to answer. The number of these alleged facts concerning which no de-

cisive probability may be had that they are real, is very great. History is but a poor remnant of a vanished world-life. This remnant divides itself into the more or less likely or unlikely. Part even of this remnant must be ruled out as probably unauthentic. Part is retained whose authenticity is more or less open to question. Still another part is accepted on the ground of a strong probability in its favor; the most authentic of mere historical facts rests on nothing surer than high probability. As examples, take the conquest of Palestine under Joshua, the Peloponnesian war, the military career of Hannibal, the strictly external history of Jesus, the missionary journeys of Paul. The alleged facts here are of four orders: first incredible, second credible but questionable, third probable, fourth of high probability.

If this is the state of the case, why are we so sure that Napoleon, Washington, Cromwell, William of Orange, Frederick the Great, Charlemagne, Cæsar, and Pericles lived? Because the facts were conjoined with ideas,

modified life, continued to do so for long periods of time, and because without these persons no rational account can be given of the civilization of their respective peoples. When it comes to Socrates and to Paul, probability becomes moral certainty. No sane mind questions the traditional view. Without the historic Socrates, Greek philosophy is an enigma; without the historic Paul, imperial Christianity is inexplicable. Facts conjoined with ideas acquired such momentum in the life of the world that their rejection becomes a mark of insanity. So we judge the historic Jesus. On the basis of mere historical fact he is open to the question by which every alleged fact is confronted. In him fact and idea unite and change the course of the world's life, and to doubt his historical reality is to-day simply indication of a pathological state of mind. Still it must be repeated that mere fact, even when it is natural fact, can attest itself by nothing stronger than probability.

When the alleged facts are miraculous, the question, Did they occur? is a much harder



one. Other questions come in, such as For what end did they take place? By whom are they attested? Is the attestation that of an eye-witness or tradition? How far were the witnesses and reporters influenced by the general belief in the miraculous? How does this exceptional and limited human experience stand against the solemn general experience of mankind? Such questions set before one the impossibility of attaining anything like certainty in regard to miracle at its best, — miracle in the evangelical record. It must therefore be placed in the category of the unverifiable. It is not on that account necessarily untrue, but its truth is not open to attestation.

When we come to ideas, to the great ideas of the Christian faith, the case is different. We ask, Are they true? But we do not go two thousand years into history in order to begin the answer to that question. These ideas are both historic and contemporaneous. They are historic, and yet they are independent of history. They offer themselves to-day, as if it were the first flush in the dawning morning

of time, to the lives of men to be tested there. Our God is still a present help in time of need ; our Lord is the living Lord moving in the hearts of living men. The kingdom of love is verified only in part, but it looms before men, inspiring them in the great process of verification. Eternal life is human existence raised to excellence, and because of that excellence full of the hope of immortality.

Even in the sphere of ideas, we must recall Kant's distinction, while we decline to be bound by his use of it. Certain ideas are incapable of verification because they are in a region beyond all possible human experience. How did God spend the eternity before the creation of the cosmos and the advent of man? What is the secret history of the Eternal mind? How do the spirits of just men made perfect live? How does the purely spiritual world subsist? What becomes of this world of sense for the disembodied spirit? These questions are, for human beings, unanswerable. They are unanswerable because they are in a region in which, while we remain men, we can have

no experience whatever. They relate to things beyond all possible human experience, and one judgment about them is as good as another, because all judgments are worthless. We may dream our dream upon such things, and so long as we do not mistake our dream for a verified idea, it will do us no harm and may do us good.

Much in the theological tradition of the Christian faith is unverifiable because as idea it lies outside the sphere of all possible human experience. That in Christian faith which is sure and mighty is the verifiable. We may test our Christian ideas of God, the grace of God, the efficacy of prayer, the possible sovereignty of the spirit in man over the flesh, the brotherhood of man, the kingdom of love, the worth of Jesus Christ for the moral idealist of to-day. Out of this vast experimental process Christianity is in each generation born anew ; and it is this contemporaneous, attested, sure Christianity to which belongs the empire of the world.

## CHAPTER II

### BELIEF IN GOD AND MIRACLE

#### I

**M**ORE and more the view prevails among educated people that miracles are no part of genuine history. The opinion prevails that at this point the Christian religion does not differ from other religions. The miraculous element, so it is more and more widely held, is the constant and spurious accompaniment, in ancient times, of every great religious movement. To-day, this element does not count; it is widely rejected; it is still more widely disregarded. Face to face with the movement which threatens to sweep the miraculous from the reasonable beliefs of mankind, it is pertinent to ask, How much will thus be lost to faith? How much will survive the storm and abide?

If the mechanism of cause and effect is

made to cover the entire field of human experience, if all human things and thoughts are under the reign of fixed law, is there room for spirit in the cosmos or in man? The sovereign interest of human life centres in the existence and character of God. If there is no God, there can be, in the full meaning of the word, no religion. If God exists, but exists without regard to man, again religion, in the full and happy sense of the term, is an impossibility. The being and character of God are thus the sovereign object and interest of faith; and the being and character of God are bound up with the ways in which he reveals that being and character. Therefore we may say that God, and God in the Christian vision of his attitude toward man, are the citadel of our faith. Whatever threatens these, threatens our religion; whatever leaves these entire and untroubled, means little or nothing to enlightened men in its otherwise destructive course. Our discussion revolves about these three fundamental questions: In what way is belief in God affected by the denial of miracle? How does it

fare with Jesus Christ if the miraculous in the evangelical record is regarded as unreal? Is the Christian life harassed or injured seriously by disregard for miracle? These questions will be discussed in the order stated, and I begin with the consideration of the relation of belief in God to miracle.

## II

God is the life and light and consolation of the world, and it is clear that his existence is independent of miracle. He is the indispensable antecedent of all miracle and of all mechanism. The miraculous means the contradiction of the customary order of the world, as when the axe is said to come from the bed of the Jordan to its surface at the call of the prophet. Mechanism means the customary order of the world regarded as invariable and inviolable, as in the statement, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"; wheat comes from wheat, barley from barley, tares from tares. The miraculous is the extraordinary and the mechanical the ordinary way of

bringing things to pass. Both refer the mind to an indispensable antecedent. The antecedent of all life, of all change, of the entire world in space and time is the Eternal God. No matter what the mode of their production may be, all events, all results, all finite beings refer themselves to the one sovereign source: "For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God."

If, therefore, there is any truth in miracle, it is as the witness of God; if there is any meaning in mechanism, it is as the revelation of his will. The Nile divides into two rivers at the Delta, but whichever stream one takes, it brings him to the same sea. If we choose to regard the operation of the cosmos as dividing into two methods, one the miraculous and the other the mechanical, it must be added that both conduct to the same goal; the terminus of all things is God.

If there is no such thing as miracle, it does not follow that there is no such being as God. God is not thus dependent upon miracle for the declaration of his will. The extremest

champion of the miraculous would not claim that if miracle is untrue, God is unreal. The fading of miracle, therefore, from the field of faith does not mean the vanishing of God from the life of the world.

One might with some reason advance this position of indifference. One might contend that the cosmos, operated as an order invariable and inviolable, is the better witness for God. Reasonable men do not work by haphazard, they work by plan; the expression of mind in any sphere of human life is the expression of a plan; the highest work of art means the completest expression of the best design. If the physical organism of man is an expression of indwelling mind, the expression is completer and more impressive in proportion to the invariable order disclosed. If the cosmos is the embodiment and expression of cosmic mind, the invariable order of the cosmos would seem to be the higher evidence of the reasonableness of the impelling mind. We should be put to utter confusion if we could not count upon the ebb and flow of the tide,



the succession of day and night, the invariable sequences of the seasons, the inviolable operation of cause and effect. In such a universe we should never know what to expect. We should be unable to adjust ourselves to the crazy world. There could be no science in such a world ; for the foundation of science is order. There could be no prevision in life ; for prevision depends upon the uniform movement in nature. Such a cosmos would be like an insane asylum ; instead of one sovereign, steady, trustworthy mind, we should have, at best or at worst as one chooses to name it, a collection of conflicting minds, bound together by the tie of madness. A miraculous universe, in the sense of a universe uncontrolled by law, would be, for a reasonable man aiming at true vision and right behavior, the supreme calamity. He would be at a loss to know what to think or what to do ; indeed, in such a universe there could be neither truth nor right. Eternal surprise would then seem to be the essence of existence, and eternal suspense the sorrow of man. Pandora's box open, with hope

gone, and infinite plagues afflicting men, would be the only proper symbol for such a chaos of things and beings.

We must not forget that the ancient word *cosmos*, and the modern word *universe*, have come to us through the observed order of existence. Facts have been unified in laws; laws of inferior range have been taken up into those of higher range; all things and all beings have been regarded as forming one whole because of the omnipresence of order; and the universe has found its being and home in the will of God. Existences as ordered, as answerable to law, as forming one sublime whole, as gathered into the boundless universe which rests in the sovereign intelligent Will, become the living, harmonious witnesses for him whose mind constitutes them, and whose will supplies them power. The story of the rainbow that appeared to Noah after the flood is the Biblical illustration of the relief that man finds in escape from an uncertain world into one sane and sure. The world of the flood is the world of miracle; and even to the surviving

Patriarch and his family it was not a wholly satisfactory place. The bow in the heavens was God's covenant with Noah, that hereafter order should prevail, that nature should no more run wild, that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, should no more fail. As often as man beheld that form of resplendent loveliness spanning the heavens,—the triumph of light in darkness and in tempest,—he was to think of God's covenant with man in the order of the world. That order, so universal, so inviolable, so truly the condition of all science and all reasonable conduct, so sure as the platform of life, and so sublime as the field of intellectual vision, deserves to be called God's covenant with man. If we call it mechanism, we need not deny that it is pervaded with mind; if we say that existence is a wheel, we may assert that in the wheel is spirit. Every wheel is dead until the power of movement is given it from some living thing. The wheels receive their power from the horse, the horse is subject to the reins, the reins are in the hands of a man, and therefore in the

wheels of his machine the spirit of the man lives. That is the issue of a true conception of mechanism. The universe of things is a vast wheel. To whatever powers in the way of intermediate causes it is fastened, the final source of movement is the Supreme Mind. If we figure the universe in its mechanical character as an infinite sun-chariot, if we look to the glorious steeds for power to turn the flaming wheels, we must not pause there: we must carry our vision onward through bit and rein to the god who drives. A mechanical universe thus turns out to be a divine universe; a mechanical universe becomes an auroral universe, with the Eternal Spirit in the wheels.

### III

Let us look into the Bible and note what may be learned there touching the relation of belief in God and miracle. Limiting our view in the first place to the Old Testament, we shall, I think, be surprised to find how largely independent of miracle is the consciousness of God enshrined there. In the great poem of

creation with which Genesis opens, there is no miracle till we come to the making of man ; all is order, consecutive order, from the primitive darkness brooded by the Eternal Spirit to the fully developed cosmos. Man is the expression of a creative act, but his life is normal after he arrives, and fits into a normal world. The exquisite biographies in the Book of Genesis were doubtless reduced to their present form at a late period. The migration of Abraham, the spiritual experiences of Jacob, and the Divine favor that rested upon Joseph are conceived, one might almost say, in the modern spirit. In the Exodus we come upon a field of miracles ; yet even here it is difficult to say how much is meant to be taken as history and how much as poetry. The Exodus reads like an epic poem, the epic of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, and their fortunes on the way to the land of promise. The vision of God attributed to Moses is indeed here and there accompanied by signs and wonders ; but, again, one is never sure that these are not the poetry into which inef-

fable experience gathered itself. It is clear that the vision is separable from the miracle ; for to him for whom all these stories of manna and quails, dividing of the Red Sea, pillars of cloud by day and pillars of fire by night, are myths, legends, or symbols, the vision of God abides. An ineffable experience shines through all these stories, and survives in its own strength when they are no longer credible.

When we come to the wisdom-literature of Israel, we hear nothing of miracle. In Job there is no miracle, if we except the epilogue ; here there is nothing but the sublime reflection of universal human experience in God's world. In Proverbs and in Ecclesiastes there is no miracle ; here again there is nothing but the wisdom which man wins by work and sorrow. We take the Book of Ruth as a work of imagination founded upon fact ; we find it written with deep and touching fidelity to the order of life and death as we know that order. In the story of Esther the same general remark may be made: we see in the ancient forms and incidents of the story our own ordered world.

For the conception of one sovereign eternal mind as the ground and ruler of the universe, we are indebted to the Hebrew prophets. The universe as a moral organism inhabited by the moral Deity is the great bequest of Hebrew seers. This idea is brought out by Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the great prophet of the Exile. It is hardly true to their burning consciousness of God to call it an idea. For these men God is eternal reality. In their thoughts and feelings and lives he is the supreme presence and certainty. In the ancient world there is nothing so impressive as the triumphant consciousness of God which these men bring into the life of their time. What are miracles compared with this, — the testimony of external wonders to this inward divine wonder? As well might one put the staging on an equality with the cathedral. Take the staging down and put it away; the great building stands in its own right. Even if true, miracles are external and mean, when set in the presence of the blazing consciousness of God in which these great souls live

and work. The origin of the whole higher character and service of Isaiah is in his vision: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."<sup>1</sup> What is this but the transcendent form of that which comes to every soul that would find and fulfill the end of existence? What is this but the splendid poetic utterance of a man who has seen God in the order of the world and above and beyond it? What is this but a spiritual revelation going forth in its native might, working and resting in its own high independence?

Jeremiah is another impressive witness to this immediateness and independence of the things of the spirit. There came to him a call



from God ; it rang in great tones through his being ; it overcame his weakness, his hesitation, his despair. It filled him with awe, ennobled him with a sense of responsibility, turned him, timid as a child, into an heroic witness for the kingdom of God. It left him with no room to doubt God, and with no need for the support of miracle. Indeed, this prophet stands for the revelation that has been confessed to be the inward and spiritual in a new and profounder sense. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah : not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. . . . But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people : and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for they

shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord : for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.”<sup>1</sup> These great words are the herald of the gospel of Christ ; they lay open to the heart the eternal nature of religion ; they show it to be a vital and righteous life in the full communion of the soul with God. They show it to be wholly independent of miracle, traveling in the greatness of its strength, and mighty for the spirit and the society in whom it truly lives.

If we look at Ezekiel, we find him with visions of God, among the captives, by the river Chebar. The word of God was spoken to his spirit ; it became his burden, his message to his people. Again the prophet is the man of God, the seer with an original and vital vision of the Eternal for his own people and time ; and his address is to the souls of men in the name and grace of the Infinite soul.

The prophet Amos is another great representative of spiritual religion. Society in his

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah xxxi, 31-34.

time was a wild welter of sin and shame; yet in the tides of that terrible social life Amos beheld and announced God. He saw that in the moral retribution in society, in the courses of retributive justice, the eternal conscience comes to a tremendous apocalypse. Carlyle said that his study of the French Revolution convinced him of the presence of God in the affairs of men and nations; from that lurid drama he learned that no sinner and no society of sinners shall go unpunished, that an eternal nemesis waits upon injustice and inhumanity, and that up from the wild whirlpools of woe and death comes the vindication of the moral order of the world. In the same spirit, Amos, looking upon the black iniquities of his time, discovers the avenging presence of the Infinite justice: "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence

will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.”<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, we have in Hosea a revelation of God through the merciful tides in the human heart. Here is a unique book embodying a unique and a gracious vision. There are in society and in history not only courses of retributive justice, but also tides of eternal compassion and forgiveness. The moral order is in the hands of the Infinite Father of men, and the stern discipline through which the sinful soul and nation are made to pass is all in the interest of an ultimate repentance, forgiveness, and redemption. Here again the character of God is read not out of miracle, but out of the heart of the moral world in man.

In the second Isaiah this vision of God in the courses of national woe and redemption is wrought out with a richness of insight and with a majesty of eloquence to which I think there are few parallels in the literature of the race. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to

<sup>1</sup> Amos ix, 2, 3.

Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." <sup>1</sup> This majestic call from the heights of God's love to the depths of national sin and despair is repeated on into the final words of the great message. National religion has become a religion of life, a religion of the living God; and his prophet looks for him, not in signs and wonders, but in the whole body of individual and social experience. Every force in life, every phase in human experience, now has found a tongue; and from the heights of man's soul in vicarious suffering and service there goes up the response to the suffering and vicarious love of God. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah gives us at his best the individual servant of Jehovah and the national servant of Jehovah; it also records at its highest in the literature of the Old Testament the vision of the God and Redeemer of men. To introduce the idea of miracle here would bring not light, but confusion; it would be to bring

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xl, 1, 2.

the mature spirit from the clear and sure consciousness of God gained in the fiery courses of experience, back to the nursery with its toys, symbols, and plays. The clear and earnest intellect protests, in the name of religion, against that return and reduction.

What shall we say of the Psalms, the incomparable Psalms? They are incomparable as poetry, because they are the unapproachable lyric expression of the spiritual life of great souls. The life presented in these songs is the life in God:—

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place  
In all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art  
God.

That faith is born not of miracle, but of life and vision. I might go on to recall these high words:—

The Lord is my light and my salvation.  
God is our refuge and strength.

For thy lovingkindness is better than life.

For thou hast been my help,

And in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

The greater Psalms are woven out of the deepest and sweetest experiences, and the blazing design in the fabric is the image of God. Here miracle is not denied; it is left at an infinite depth below this elevation of the soul in God. The pain of life, its burden, disappointment, defeat, loss, and sorrow, its whole dark tragedy, is lifted into the being of God and his beauty is made the soul of it all. Nothing outside the words of Jesus can match the spiritual depth of these Psalms, their fidelity to the profoundest sorrow and the loftiest joy, their accents of sweet assurance of God, and their sense of him as life's last refuge and hope. When, therefore, we are troubled over the modern disregard of miracle, let us recall the fact that the greatest things in the Hebrew Scriptures are in sublime isolation from miracle. Listen again to the prophetic call from the testimony without to the witness within:

“The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.”

## IV

So much I have said in general about the relative independence of miracle of the faith in God in the Old Testament. I now wish to show in detail how the vision of God is held both in the Old and New Testaments. As a preliminary remark, in accordance with the whole higher spirit of the Bible, it may be said that there are two affronts to the mind of man: first, to affirm that God cannot be known; second, to affirm that he can be known directly. The first affirmation confines vision to the temporal; the second gives the vision of the Eternal apart from the temporal. Both positions are not in accord with the fact. We are not confined to the temporal, and we cannot see God beyond the temporal. We know God in and through the temporal, and in and through the character which the temporal is



made to bear. There is a vision of God, but the vision is indirect.

The Biblical consciousness of God may be reduced to four forms. There is the consciousness of God expressed in the words: "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Taking this statement as it stands, what does it mean? It conceives God in bodily form, it looks upon the face of God as we look upon the face of man, it takes the face of God as the symbol of the divine soul as we take the face of man as the symbol of the human soul; and it reads the supreme mind in the supreme face as we read character in the countenance of a friend. The vision of God is indirect; it is intense; it is confident; it is victorious; but it is through an intervening face.

Paul says in his great lyric on love: "For now we see in a mirror, darkly." The mirror of which he writes is the bronze mirror of his time. It might be dull, or it might be burnished; it might be in a poor or in an excellent condition; it might be susceptible of indefinite improvement as a mirror. Still, it could

be nothing more than a mirror ; it could give only the image, the reflection of the object. Here is Paul's consciousness of God laid open to us. Whether it referred itself to Christ or to the wondrous changes wrought in his own character, it was a consciousness of God as reflected in his Lord or in his own soul. The vision was again indirect ; it was given in an order of life, the Lord's, his own, the world's.

In the Fourth Gospel we are told that no man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. Here the vision of Jesus becomes the vision of God. Here is a thinker, a sympathizer, a sufferer, a doer, a victor, in whom as in a living mirror we may behold the character of God as Eternal thinker, lover, doer, and victor. The vision of Jesus is the vision of God through the Divine man.

Once more we learn, and this time from the lips of Jesus, that the pure in heart shall see God. Tested by experience, this must mean that God becomes visible to the pure mind in the intention of man's life, in its fidelity, its

happiness and hope. Just as in the spirit level of the mason when it finds a level wall the eye looks back into his, so the plan of the soul, the plan of human life, becomes strikingly visible when the mind is a pure, a disinterested mind ; and in the plan of our humanity there is the presentation of God. When this plan is operated in a righteous life, in a fellowship of righteous lives, in the new creation of righteous lives of which Paul speaks, the presentation of God is great and impressive. There is the vision of God, but again it is through an order of the human spirit, an order made active and potent in life.

This Biblical idea of the vision of God in the order and life of man is variously and richly set forth. In one Psalm we read, "In Judah is God known" ; in another, "God is known in her palaces" ;<sup>1</sup> in the first, God is reflected in the life of his people ; in the second, he is seen in their prosperity and splendor. Again, we read that this poor man cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxvi, 1 ; xlviii, 3.

all his troubles. Here the exigencies of existence covered with prayer lead to the vision of God in the terrible trial. We are elsewhere admonished to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God; here God is known as the Maker of the spiritual life. "Return to thy rest, O my soul," is another cry from the depths. God is known as man's refuge and rest in a wild world. In the days preceding Pentecost we are told that the disciples were of one accord, and that they continued together in prayer. Thus the new society of Christian men and women became a new witness for the God of love. The words of Jesus, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," are the supreme instance of this approach to God; that approach is first through the Divine man, and then through the divine in all men.

There is one great book in the New Testament which I find seldom meets the appreciation that it merits, I mean the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was written to Hebrews who had become Christians after Jerusalem had been destroyed, the temple desecrated and reduced

to a heap of stones ; when Israel had no longer a place or name among the nations of the earth ; when the facts of life were in bitter and mocking contradiction of the glorious hopes of prophet and seer ; when Christians were poor, scattered, without power, suffering and dying in an empire sinking under the weight of its own corruption ; when the promised return of the Lord Christ had been so long delayed as to fail any longer to inspire courage and hope. In this forlorn condition into which the Christian community had come, in this consciousness to which it had been slowly and inevitably brought by the iron mechanism of the temporal order in which it stood, a nameless writer of the highest insight and character set himself the task of translating the religion of his race from the letter into the spirit, from dependence upon events in time to trust in the coming and power of the Eternal Spirit. The whole Old Testament dispensation became a symbol through which he discovered the character of the final spiritual religion. Time itself became a symbol, a form of sense, a poetic em-

blem for the revelation of the invisible God and his kingdom of love. Would that religious men and teachers of religion would read this monumental book and gain from it the sure vision of that kingdom which cannot be shaken! Here was a man who went through the discipline that now is upon us, and who came forth with the eternal gospel delivered from the beggarly elements of the world, holding its place in human society by its divine right, doing the greatest things that can be done for men, — giving them the certain vision of the Eternal God, strength to serve him, and power to trust the world to his infinite good will in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In this brief study of the consciousness of God among the people of Israel, we find it resting, not upon portent or wonder, but upon the divine order of man's life. This mighty consciousness of God both in the Old Testament and in the New is absolutely independent of miracle. It is not even in the region where miracles are supposed to take place; it is in the sphere of the spirit. In that sphere Prophet,

seer, Psalmist, man of God, met the Eternal spirit. Through the constitution of the soul, individual and social, and through its operation in the vision and service of the moral ideal, these men of sovereign religious genius beheld God. They attained thus to the vision of God; they were able to breathe something of the Ineffable into their words, and those words, because they enshrine the supreme consciousness of God, become the Bible for mankind.

## v

If now we consider the grounds upon which reasonable men in all ages have believed in God, we shall see that miracle in the sense of the suspension or violation of natural law does not count. These grounds have been some striking personal experience of a spiritual nature, supported by a general process of reasoning. Socrates lived and acted under a sense of a special intimation of the Divine will. In the restraining influence of his demon, the belief in God of the pious Greeks of his time was made personal and commanding. The

tradition of faith thus became real to Socrates, as the tradition of Christian belief becomes real to many in our time through what is called conversion. In behalf of this intense subjective interest, Socrates presents his argument for the existence and goodness of God against the little atheist Aristodemus!<sup>1</sup> It is founded upon the evidence of design in man's body and intellect. It is, as Macaulay remarks, as exact a statement of the argument from design as that presented by Paley. It is no less impressive than Paley's, although far less elaborate. What concerns us here is neither the validity nor the invalidity of this theistic inference, but the fact that it is an example of a great theological tradition wherein belief in God is justified, not by an appeal to miracle, but by the evidence of rational order.

The historic arguments in which belief in God has found vindication are the ideal, the cosmological, the arguments from design and from the moral nature of man. From the idea of the absolutely perfect being, Anselm, Des-

<sup>1</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, B. 1, 4.



cartes, and others inferred the existence of the supremely perfect mind. From the universe as an event, a phenomenon, other thinkers have inferred a cause, a noumenal ground adequate to the production and to the continuance in being of all created worlds. From the marks of design in the cosmos, in the world of animals, in the body and mind of man, it has been inferred that the Creator and Preserver of all is a being of boundless intelligence; and from the moral structure of the human soul and from the spiritual experience of men, it has been argued that God is good. I must repeat that we are not now concerned with either the soundness or the unsoundness of these famous forms of argument, but with the fact that they are one and all exclusive of miracle.

Two forms of the theistic argument merit special attention. Upon this question Berkeley and Kant stand at the farthest extreme each from the other. For Berkeley the whole sensible world is the language in which the Eternal Spirit instructs and educates the human

spirit ; for this great thinker the sensible world finds its meaning and support in the mind of God. Whether one agrees with Berkeley or not, there is something impressive and searching in the consciousness that in the continuous flow of ordered sensation, in the visual, auditory, and tactual images that perpetually crowd the mind, men are the partakers of a sacrament that sets forth in all the richness of color, in all the power of music, and in all the reality of touch, the veritable presence and life of God. Again, the argument not only does not rest in miracle, it excludes it ; for the inviolable order immanent in the flow of sensations is the essential thing in this mighty sacrament.

Kant had no confidence in arguments for the Divine existence drawn from the cosmos. As an event it is finite, as an ordered event it is finite, and what we seek is the Infinite God. Kant's critique of the historic forms of the theistic argument is not sympathetic. He does not bear in mind the fact that all man's thoughts are imperfect, both in substance and

in form ; nor does he allow to the arguments which he discredits the right to live in their imperfection. That mercy I to others show, that mercy show to me, is a good rule in philosophy. If we refuse to consider the imperfect thought of an opponent from the inside and in a sympathetic spirit, we have no right to expect that men in general will deal from the inside and in generous sympathy with our imperfect thoughts. Kant's critique of the historic forms of the theistic argument has been applied ruthlessly to his own. Let us not follow his critics here ; let us regard with open mind his great imperfect thought. For Kant, God is essential to complete the moral meaning of human existence. The central thing in man's life is duty ; the duty calls for the conditions essential to its fulfillment ; these are freedom, that the dutiful act may have worth ; immortality, that the perfectly dutiful life may be attained ; God, that the moral world of man may be intelligible and sure. Here is depth and grandeur of insight, final trust in the moral order of the world, wonder in the

presence of the highest phase of ultimate reality, but no miracle, and no room for it.

In this apostolic succession of thinkers about God, Spinoza represents another tradition. It is easy to see that his profoundly religious soul is carried away by the idea of the Infinite. An inward experience of comfort and peace in God awakens the acute and daring intellect; and that intellect builds an impressive and enduring structure of thought to prove that man is a self-conscious mode of the Eternal substance. The point to be noted is the absence of miracle, the overwhelming realization and the close and vivid articulation of God in the thought and argument of the philosopher.

Spinoza's theistic successor is Schleiermacher, who finds God in feeling, especially in the feelings of dependence and moral obligation. Here a new chapter is begun in men's belief in God. Whether we agree with Schleiermacher or not, we must note the depth of his consciousness of God and the further fact that it has nothing to do with miracle; indeed, the thing for which religious men of to-day

are most indebted to this German thinker is that he recognizes so profoundly that religion concerns the spirit of man in immediate relation to the Infinite Spirit. According to Schleiermacher, religion is an indestructible human interest ; it is the highest and mightiest of all our interests ; and it rests on nothing foreign to itself, it rests on the abiding nature of man's soul in immediate and indissoluble relation to God.

If now we turn to the custom of Christian men, we shall be confirmed in our conclusion that miracle is of small concern to the true believer in God. We receive our belief in God from the pious community in which we live. We are first of all believers in God on the strength of tradition, and mere traditionalists we remain till some crisis in the soul overtakes us. Some morning when we face the ideal, when we stand under the frown of the ideal that we have disregarded or denied, when we would give the whole world to be on terms of self-respect in the presence of that ideal, when through one sorrow and another we rise into

peace and resolve henceforth to live as the servant of the ideal, our faith in God becomes bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Out of such a mood Fichte wrote his "Vocation of Man"; out of such an experience Carlyle wrote the three most powerful chapters in the prose of the nineteenth century, — "The Everlasting Nay," "The Point of Indifference," "The Everlasting Yea."

It may be said that God is found in three great spheres of our human existence. In the sphere of thought, there is the vision of the Supreme Being, in whom all life and all reality terminate; in the sphere of thought, God becomes vision. In the sphere of action, moral action, God is known as the ultimate source of impulse, inspiration, victorious will; in the sphere of moral action, God is known as power. In the sphere of character, the character which is the issue of thought and action combined, God is known as indwelling spirit; he is known in this sphere as possessor and possessed, as possessor of our soul through habit, as possessed by the soul through habit, tend-

ency, the steady current of desire and hope. In this great sense it may be said:—

The Lord is thy keeper :  
The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.  
The sun shall not smite thee by day,  
Nor the moon by night.  
The Lord will keep thee from all evil ;  
He will keep thy soul.  
The Lord will keep thy going out and thy coming in,  
From this time forth and for evermore.<sup>1</sup>

In all this there is no word of miracle; there is nothing but the glory of living in God now, thinking his world in him, serving his kingdom in him, and in the fixed and yet growing habit of the soul possessing him and possessed by him. Read again Augustine's account of the last days of his beautiful mother, and in that connection read once more Matthew Arnold's sonnet on "Monica's Last Prayer," as a witness to the ways of the spirit in bringing us to the full consciousness of God.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxxi, 5-8.

"Ah, could thy grave at home, at Carthage, be!"

"Care not for that, and lay me where I fall.

Everywhere heard will be the judgment-call;

But at God's altar, oh! remember me.'

Thus Monica, and died in Italy.

Yet fervent had her longing been, through all

Her course, for home at last, and burial

With her own husband, by the Libyan sea.

Had been! but at the end, to her pure soul

All tie with all beside seem'd vain and cheap,

And union before God the only care.

Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole.

Yet we her memory, as she pray'd, will keep,

Keep by this: "Life in God, and union there!"

This leads me to recall here the communion of saints with God. The literature of this communion is very great in extent and in worth. The Fourth Gospel catches and perpetuates notes in the life of Jesus that his disciples will forever cherish, his sense so perfect and so sure that the Eternal is an open secret in time, his consciousness radiant, all-triumphant in the light and might of God. The Epistles of John mark the persistence of



this mode of thought; the discovery that God is love, that God is light in whom there is no darkness at all, is a discovery through the courses of the life of the soul. The "Confessions" of Augustine, the "Theologia Germanica," the "Ecclesiastica Musica," the entire witness of the Mystics, and the inner light of the Quakers bring us into a world of spirit to which miracle is foreign, and where inference is but a single step. In the presence of all these ways by which the consciousness of God is kept in the world, and made availing over the tides of human interest and passion, it becomes clear that, whatever may be the fortune awaiting miracle, our faith in God is not involved in that fortune; that faith is original, independent, and sure.

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## CHAPTER III

### JESUS CHRIST AND MIRACLE

#### I

**I**F miracle is a myth, will not the significance of Jesus Christ be greatly reduced? If Jesus and his gospel are wholly confined within the natural order, like the motion in the wheel, like the physical life of ordinary men, will not the loss to faith be very great? In the evangelical record, is not miracle the constant accompaniment of his career from beginning to end? And how can this large element be eliminated without reducing the dignity and freedom of his recorded career?

Perhaps it may prepare the way for the happy surprise in which our discussion must issue to reflect that we can imagine a career as full of miracle as the life of Jesus is believed to be, and yet without worth. The miraculous does not impart to our Lord his worth. We

can imagine one born without a human father, able to still storms and to walk on the tempestuous waves, to feed multitudes on food ordinarily sufficient only for a few persons, cleansing lepers, opening blind eyes, unstopping deaf ears, raising the dead, and finally himself reappearing after death; we can imagine a career like this full of portent and wonder from beginning to end, and yet absolutely destitute of those supreme qualities that have given to Jesus the moral leadership of the world. It is possible to conceive this miraculous career as entirely devoid of moral worth. If Satan has the power to transform himself into an angel of light, we can imagine this miraculous person moving through his wonder-working career not only destitute of high qualities, but also with a malign aim. Plato's story of the ring of Gyges is an illustration of this possibility. The wearer of this ring becomes invisible. He moves in an order of miracle; for him natural law does not exist. Yet his power to do with nature as he pleases may mean boundless opportunity to defraud

and outrage human life undetected. And if this wizard becomes a beneficent wizard, who knows that he is not devising new forms of deception and plunder? It is plainly possible, therefore, that we might have the miracles of Jesus without Jesus himself; that we might possess the wonderful works without possessing the Divine man.

If this is possible, something follows of great consequence. If we might possess the miracles of our Lord without possessing the Lord himself, does it not follow that we might lose the miracles of our Lord and still retain him? If all the miracles were gone, the vision of Jesus would remain. There is no mention of miracle in the Lord's Prayer, none in the great discourse in which that prayer stands, none in the wonderful parabolic teaching of our Master, none in the wisdom with which he filled the world. There are three things of immortal value in the teaching of Jesus. There is his vision of God as infinite compassionate love, the Maker and Father of men. There is his vision of man as the child of the Eternal,

fitted in this temporal existence to reproduce in his human relations the dear and just love of God. There is the vision which Jesus has of himself as the person in whom these two visions are verified. He has his personal vision of God; he lives out in conduct his vision of his sonhood to God; and he becomes thereby the living witness for the God who is the universal Father and for a sonhood wide as the race of man. These three visions are absolutely independent of miracle, they are the direct insight of his mind into the heart of things. His insights have power in them to control the thinking and to renew the character of all who are willing to move in their light.

I have summed up the teaching of Jesus in these three visions, but any such summary is utterly inadequate. The wisdom of Jesus comes up through the relations and circumstances of man as the life of nature comes in spring and summer. The hard and barren surface rests back upon life; it is broken at a thousand points into the path of life; it is transformed by the tender beauty and the

abounding fruitfulness of life; it becomes a new world, a new humanity. Never man so spake. His words are meat and drink to the soul; they are spirit and life. And when we recall the fact that man cannot live by bread alone, that he needs the word of God, the word of supreme wisdom and cheer, we begin to see what the infinite wealth of the wise teaching of Jesus means. When he says that God makes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good and sends his rain upon the just and the unjust, his vision enables him to discover in this order a hint of the infinite magnanimity of the Eternal. Lessons come through law; law operating in apparent indifference to the worth or worthlessness of men is lifted into a symbol of a moral perfection in God hitherto unimagined, and the careless God becomes the eternal magnanimity. Such is the universal result of the teaching of Jesus. It is almost traduced in our summaries. It meets life at a thousand points, and leaves the particular trial shining in a flood of light. This wisdom and the divining spirit in which

it issues are entirely independent of miracle. No miracle could increase the depth, the pathos, the fidelity to life, or the reach of suggestion concerning the attitude of God to men of the Parable of the Lost Son. The absence of miracle could in no way lessen the wisdom and benignity of such teaching. The natural order cannot forbid the mother and child from recognizing each the other, from responding each to the other's love. Within the fixed bounds of nature this insight, this freedom and joy, are possible. The natural order cannot prohibit or in any way limit or mar the wisdom of Jesus; the vision of Jesus is unconditioned; his freedom is not in the keeping of any force other than his own mind.

It is equally clear that his character is independent. It has the twofold significance that we discern in all great character, it is a product and it is an achievement. It is a product of the Infinite to whom he is in a constant self-surrender. In that constant self-surrender his will is taking its shape from the Eternal will, his mind is receiving form

from the Eternal mind, his heart is under the culture of the Eternal heart. Jesus moves in the transcendent sense of God, and from God comes the product of his perfect character. It is an issue from the Infinite soul, to whom his soul goes up in honor and self-surrender. This process is within the bounds of nature, and yet nature has nothing to do with it. It is a process in the freedom of the spirit. Wherever Jesus might be, he had but to think and God would know it; he had but to think and he would know God perfecting his being. Wherever he might be, he had only to lift his spirit and there was the Eternal, he had only to open his soul and God was within him. To speak here of miracle, wonder, portent, is a kind of blasphemy. Shall we introduce into this supreme sanctuary of humanity the vulgar appeal to sense, the tricks and feats of the wizard? Nature at her best, miracle at its highest, is at an infinite depth below the elevation on which the soul of God and the soul of Jesus stand in a communion ineffable.



The character of Jesus viewed as an achievement precludes miracle; it is not only independent of miracle, it is inconsistent with miracle. Here the great temptation is illuminating. Under trial, stones must not be turned into bread; nor must the Highest throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple. Character is not thus won. It is won under the heat and burden of the day, in service and in suffering within the terms of the natural life. Jesus stood in human relations with human ideals and under human obligations. He stood under these obligations in a world of trouble and contradiction. To provide for him a miraculous escape from this order of trial and contradiction would be to deny him the opportunity that God has given to every man, and to withhold from him the eternal gladness which God has made possible for every soul. In Nazareth, by the Jordan, in the wilderness of Judea, by the Sea of Galilee, in all the towns and cities of his country, among his disciples and among the multitudes that came to hear him, with

those who loved him and with those who tried to defeat him, Jesus found the opportunity of his existence. Through this natural order, with human lives set in it, Jesus won his character out of the grace of the Eternal. Through this order of trial and service came the strength and benignity of his soul. In one sense he thought seldom of himself and often and much of the needy world. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." He lived out of the heart of the paradox, "he that saves his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life shall save it." But after all, this was but the method of his life. He lost it in loving thought and service to find it in yet richer perfection; he departed from himself in devotion to the good of others to return to himself in a sublimer self-consciousness. And we must think of him who in so many ways is the great consecration of the beauty of our world as the Divine artist. He had the artist's vision of the completed human character; and he had the artist's

knowledge of the ways and means of artistic creation and the patience, the infinite loving patience. Thus Jesus won his soul. He walked the weary way of the world. He did its poor work. He spent his strength in lowly service. He met and overcame the evils of life, small and great. He bore his trouble with benignity. He accepted supreme disappointment not only with no trace of bitterness, but also with infinite compassion. He transfigured the mean circumstances of existence by the eternal romance of the dutiful spirit. Like the flower in the swamp, he lifted above the vile flood of things the stainless purity and perfect beauty of his soul, and up through the mire and dirt of the earth he drew from God the perfecting grace.

I have said that the temptation of Jesus would lose its whole meaning if miracle were introduced into it. The same remark must be made of the scene in Gethsemane. What is there in the records of the world to compare with this? Here is the supremely faithful and loving soul face to face with utter temporal

defeat ; here is the highest service about to receive as reward infamy, torture, and death. The whole tragedy of existence is here opened to the heart — the reversal of just expectation, the contradiction of just hope. Here in infinite night Jesus suffers alone ; here he speaks in the thick darkness his inmost thought to God ; here he lays bare the horror in his heart over what he has done and what he is about to receive ; here he offers the prayer whose initial cry is that the cup of death may pass from him, and whose final words are the greatest ever spoken in this world : “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” If this experience is not great, nothing known to man is great. How far away from the poor show of miracle it is. How sublime it is as the triumph of a soul in the Eternal soul. How precious it is as an attestation of the reality of the human spirit and the Divine. How great it is with illumination and peace for the brave in all the generations as they suffer in the night, as they appeal to God in the depths. What an infinite order it throws open, where

souls caught in the tragic order of the world are upon the stairs that slope through darkness up to God. How vast, terrible, beautiful, and near to the Eternal peace it shows our human world to stand. Let no miracle profane its sanctity, let no thought of miracle degrade or diminish its hallowed and infinite import.

A sect of some significance arose in the early church claiming that Jesus did not die, that he only appeared to die. This sect thought it inconsistent with the dignity of our Lord that he should die. This folly was fittingly met with expulsion from the body of normal Christian faith. The death of Jesus was real; it was true that he saved others, but himself he could not save. His devotion to his cause must be unto the uttermost. And whatever may be our philosophy of the event, the death of Jesus has been recognized by all believers in him as an element of power, in his religion, of transcendent value. We recall that death in our worship at stated intervals: the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the sacra-

ment of his death. As an expression, as an attestation of love, the whole church throughout the world kneels in its presence. Our chief objection to transubstantiation and consubstantiation is not that they are absurdities, but that they obscure with the quackery of miracle the utmost splendor in the bright domain of love. While we worship in this sanctuary we cry, Take these things hence; my Father's house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of jugglers. When Jesus said, "It is finished," and added, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he consummated his earthly career in a character that is spiritual, and as such is the sovereign light and comfort of men.

## II

Taken as a whole, and as a service to the religious life, will not the career of Jesus suffer great reduction in value, if the miraculous is entirely eliminated from it? In answer to this question, let us take the two instances of the miraculous that are oftenest before our

minds to-day : the birth of Jesus and his bodily resurrection. In these two fundamental instances the whole question may be considered.

Among reasonable Christians of all types of belief it is, I think, generally felt that it is immaterial how Jesus began, or how he came into the world. They feel that they are concerned not with the process, but with the result. And it may here be added that about the origin of the life of Jesus knowledge is unattainable ; the life itself is before the world. If that life in its solitary perfection is the supreme mystery, let it so stand. One mystery is not explained by resolving it into another. No denial concerning the manner of the beginning of the life of our Lord can touch the fair and sovereign result ; that is fact ; that is open to the judgment of the world. The theory that Jesus had no human father cannot make him more Divine ; the denial of that theory cannot in any way interfere with his supremacy. Whichever way he began to be, Jesus is what he is. He is independent of the question how he came into our world.

There are many to whom the tradition that Jesus had no human father is precious. As no one can prove that he had a human father, their sentiment on this subject is unassailable. There are many, and these among the best and soundest of the disciples of Jesus, to whom this tradition is unwelcome. They recall the fact that neither in the Gospel by Mark nor in the Gospel by John is the subject mentioned; that in all the New Testament writings outside of the stories in Matthew and Luke, there is not a word in favor of it. Indeed, scholars whose orthodoxy has never been disputed have contended that Paul's view is opposed to the traditional view. Paul uses these words of his Master: "Who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." For the view that Jesus had no human father, the evidence in the New Testament is at best slight. If the belief was current in the apostolic church, it was considered of little moment. What Paul and Peter



and John considered immaterial, we may consider immaterial; what the Second and the Fourth Gospels disregard, we may disregard; what in the entire New Testament is relegated to two stories in the beginning of the First and Third Gospels, we may relegate to a place of similar subordination.

Supported by Scripture in so slight a way as this tradition is, one must look elsewhere for explanation of its hold upon Christian feeling. A theory of human nature lies back of it. This theory is that human nature is depraved, and that its natural issue is necessarily depraved. In men and women there is nothing good. When they become husband and wife, father and mother, that which is born of them partakes of their depravity. From human parents there cannot come by ordinary generation a perfect child. Jesus was a perfect child; therefore he could not have come into the world by ordinary generation.

This argument has been strengthened through many generations of Christian history by ascetic feeling. Men and women have been

ashamed of their humanity, they have looked upon their natural impulses as a humiliation, they have regarded family life as a concession to the animal in their nature; they have considered the unmarried state as higher than the married, as indeed the only condition compatible with moral purity. A celibate priesthood has set the example to this way of thinking. An inveterate prejudice has thus arisen against the honor of wedded love and natural human parenthood.

Against both these positions it is impossible too strongly to protest. Human nature is not a depraved thing; it has been outraged; it is outraged; but in spite of outrage it remains higher than all else that we know except its own ideals. It is our witness for God, our chief witness, and the less we see of its inherent honor, the less we see of him. Human beings are capable of love, and wherever love exists, character is cleansed and elevated. The love of a man for a woman and the love of a woman for a man, under the sanction of law, and in the form of marriage, is the heart of

all that is best in the life of the race. It is true that human nature does not answer to its own ideals. That simply shows another aspect of its greatness. It is dissatisfied with itself because God troubles it with his presence. It longs for the new heaven and the new earth because the impulse of the Perfect is alive in its heart. It cannot rest until it rest in God because he has made it for himself. The failure to do justice to human nature is less strange than the failure to see the dignity of natural human parenthood. While it is true that some of the best men and women who have ever lived have voluntarily remained outside wedded life, while it is true that many may be justified in this attitude to-day, it must still be said that the ideal state for every man and every woman is marriage as the sacrament of love. The single life may be accepted as a sacrifice ; it is always less than the best. The best thing in the happiest human existence is family love, and the best thing in family love is parenthood. The man and the woman who have not had their first-born laid under the protection of their

tenderness and truth cannot know how near to the human heart the Lord and Giver of life may come. The sanctuaries of the world are not its churches, mosques, and temples; they are the places where children are born of men and women in honorable wedlock. There in the awe and mystery of the natural life God shows his face as he does nowhere else in all the universe. The utmost sanctity of our world lies in its worthy paternity and maternity. And only God knows how the worth of this wicked world is renewed through the process of natural human parenthood. So long as men love women worthily and women love men worthily, so long as these lovers become husbands and wives under the sanction of law, the process of natural parenthood will keep in our world chivalry, honor, tenderness, fidelity, faith, and the certain sense of the dear Eternal God. Take out of our race marriage and productive human love, and all the great things in human character will disappear.

It is immensely interesting to find the Greek Aristotle and the American Edwards at one

here. The Greek philosopher saw that the animal impulse in man and woman takes on a moral character when touched by love ; and the American theologian saw the same law of life,<sup>1</sup> an insight indeed common to all good men. Love lives in natural impulses and processes, and changes their character. Thus it is that children in worthy human homes are born of the Spirit. By the strength of the Holy Ghost they began to be ; by his strength they were brought into the world. In this sense it is forever true that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost while born of his mother and her honorable husband.

The miracle at the beginning of the life of Jesus does not, therefore, fall in with the thoughts and experiences of reasonable Christian people to-day. The nearer to Christ that men and women in their homes come, the less acceptable becomes that miracle, the less compatible with their own life and hope. Besides, it strikes them as an awkward miracle. The

<sup>1</sup> *Ethics*, Book IX, 12, 25 ; *The Nature of Virtue*, chapter vii.

influence of the father upon the child is slight compared with the influence of the mother. The child is literally bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh; indeed, all the world acknowledges the predominance, the sovereignty of the mother. If, therefore, the Creative Spirit is unable to neutralize the influence of the father in so far as it is malign, how can he overcome the infinitely greater influence of the mother in so far as it is unfortunate? It is this view of the subject that gives to the miracle in question the appearance of awkwardness and futility.

Three possibilities are here set before us. In the first possibility we are driven back in an endless regress of miracle. We are driven back from the immaculate child to the immaculate mother, from the immaculate mother to the immaculate grandmother, back to the immaculate first mother. In the second possibility we must claim with Edward Irving that Jesus derived from his mother a taint in the flesh which he overcame in the spirit. In the third possibility we hold that in bringing his

Son into the world the Lord and Giver of life lived in the process of natural parenthood, controlled its issues, and brought forth the perfect, the Divine child.

Whether he came with miracle or without it, Jesus is the same; whether his life came by the path of nature or by the path of miracle, it is from God. Of so much we are sure. And in our present leanings toward the natural, here we appear to have found certain gains. We do not like to think that human nature is essentially bad, that under God it is incapable of the greatest things. We have little patience with the preference of the celibate over the wedded life. We know how great is the domestic life of good men and women, and we long for the adequate vision of what we believe to be the best thing in our human world. The elimination of miracle here seems, therefore, to be gain. In one case we have a divine result through a miraculous process with the infelicity of an implied slur upon parenthood; in the other we have a divine result through a natural process with the happiness of having

found a new standard and immortal honor for the parenthood of the world.

For myself, as I stand among the wise men by the manger in Bethlehem, I forget to raise the question, even in thought, how this child came to be; with the wise men, I can only open my heart in homage and gifts. If at any less inspired time and place I pass in thought this scene of tender and transcendent loveliness back into its utmost beginnings, I am sure that I behold nothing but all-hallowing, all-transforming love, and in the presence of a mystery too full of God for mortal vision to pierce, I desire, like the prophet of old, to wrap my mantle about my face, and answer the Eternal honor that lives here, and that lives in the process of natural parenthood in all worthy men and women, in silent awe and thankful trust.

When we come to the resurrection of Jesus, we come to that which is central in the gospel; apostolic faith and service begin here. There is only one mind at this point among the teachers and leaders in the apos-



tolic community. Peter and James and John and Paul had seen the Lord; they believed in a risen Lord; they served a risen Lord. Paul recites the fact that after his death Jesus "appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared unto James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one born out of due time, he appeared to me also. . . . Whether then it be I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."<sup>1</sup> Here is absolute unanimity of faith in the risen Christ. Nothing can be clearer, nothing simpler, than this fact; apostolic life, labor, joy, and hope rose out of faith in the risen Lord. About this belief among the apostles there is no doubt, no uncertainty, no shadow of any kind. Our Christian faith began with those who were sure that they had seen the Lord after his passion; it began with those who were disciples and servants not of a dead, but of a living and reigning Christ.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians xv, 6-11.

Is the bodily resurrection of Jesus essential to this faith? If the physical resurrection is denied in the name of natural law, does it follow that the spiritual resurrection must be unreal? The Gospels seem to describe a physical rising from the dead; Paul's vision of Jesus was spiritual. Which form of resurrection is the surer and the mightier, that to which the Gospels bear testimony, or that of which Paul is the witness?

The essential thing here is the assurance of a risen Lord; we are not supremely concerned about the manner of the resurrection; what we desire is assurance of the fact. We desire to know if, after his crucifixion, Jesus was able to convince his disciples that he was still alive, that he was still with them, the source of their life and wisdom and hope. It seems to me that if we can be sure that we have a living and reigning Lord, we shall not be greatly troubled over the manner of his resurrection. Did Jesus survive death? Did he appear to his disciples after death? Did he convince them that he was still alive?

Did he continue to convince them that he was always with them on to the end of their lives? Of this there can be no doubt.

They had seen the Lord; they knew him in these appearances as the Lord; they continued to receive his word; they became conscious that his life in them was more emphatic than their own. He was in them the hope of glory. Their entire service and character was the attestation of the clearness and the honesty of their minds upon this fundamental question; they knew him and the power of his resurrection.

What was the ground of their assurance? If we deny the bodily appearance of Jesus after death, is not the faith of the apostles an illusion? This leads to another question. What is the proof of existence? Is it not influence over our lives? Why do we believe in the existence of the external world? We do not see it, we do not hear it; it is not that which any sense reports it to be. One sense says it is glorious with color, another that it is colorless; one sense reports music in it,

another reports eternal silence ; one tells us it is hard and cold, another that it is soft and hot. These reports make of the external world the consummate contradiction. Is it anything ? If it is real, how do we know it ? Because of its influence over us ; in it we live and move and have our physical being. Our minds are kept in constant motion by its appeal. We cannot flee from its presence, we cannot escape its power. It is with us when awake and when asleep, in childhood, in youth, in manhood, and in old age. We awoke at birth to feel its breath upon our brow ; we sink into the sleep of death drawing upon its life with our last breath. Because of its ceaseless power over us we believe in the reality of the external world.

Why do we believe in the existence of a friend ? We have not seen his mind, his soul, we know not that he is or what he is by direct vision. We believe in him because of his power over us. He has molded our intelligence ; he has purified and enriched our heart ; he has built up into inward strength a great purpose ;

he has been a soul of gladness in our existence, and because of his power over us we believe that he lives. And because that dead body heeds not, hears not our call, in no way affects us, in no way wields power over us, we believe that it is lifeless. Real being is power : whatever has power over us is alive ; whatever is without power over us is dead. Can we frame a better test of real existence than that ?

Why do we believe in God ? No man hath seen God at any time, the senses do not give us God. We have been made by life other than our own, and we think of him as the Lord and Giver of life ; we are touched in ten thousand ways, and we think of God as the aboriginal impulse under whatever affects our beings. We are moved in the pursuit of truth, we are lifted in the love of it, we are drawn upward into obedience to it, our existence is made to take on moral strength and value, and our hearts are filled with a thousand high desires. We believe that the ultimate source of the grace that thus sweetens and shapes our existence is God. He is known

by us because of his power over us ; he is known as the strength of our heart and our portion forever by the availing grace of his presence. If God should do nothing for us, if he should wield no power over us, if he should send us no calls to repentance, no contritions of heart, no renewing grace, no abiding inspirations, no lasting solace and hope, we should have no evidence of his existence. God is not known to sense ; he is not known by sense ; he is known to the soul that is renewed out of his eternal grace.

If this test of the living and the real is true, we may well compose ourselves concerning the manner of the resurrection. Take Peter as an example of the believer in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Which is the greater witness to Peter that his Lord is alive and at the right hand of God, the fact that on several mysterious occasions he saw Jesus after his passion with the eye of flesh, or the fact that Jesus has given him out of the unseen a new mind, a new heart, a new character, a life in which the grace of the Lord is the prevailing

power? Which is the greater witness to the reality of the risen Lord, the sense of Peter, or the soul of Peter made like the soul of his Master?

### III

This leads us to Paul, the great witness for the risen Christ. The relation of Paul to Jesus Christ is one of the greatest things in the New Testament. With Paul stand all believers in Jesus who did not know him, and all who could not know him in his earthly life. This apostle is the representative of the believing world after Jesus had disappeared from the earth. He is not only the apostle to the nations, he is also the apostle to the world that can never know Jesus as a human being in time.

The other apostles were the disciples and personal friends of Jesus during his public ministry. They were with him in the fields of Galilee, by the Sea of Tiberias, in the wide expanses beyond the Jordan, in Samaria, in the wild solitudes and the crowded villages and the cities of Judea. The earth, the sky,

and the sea, the wild flowers and the singing birds, the great sun as he ran his daily course, and the solemn stars were hallowed for those disciples by the presence of their Master. So, too, the sick, the bereaved, the sinful, the proud, all sorts and conditions of human beings, — mothers and their children, masters and beloved servants, publicans and sinners, despairing penitents and complacent rascals, — were another framework for the life of Jesus. Yet again, these disciples had heard him speak. They had been taught by him; they had witnessed his works of healing and the perpetual outflow of his efficacious sympathies. They had heard him speak to God, and in his prayer he had carried them to the gate of heaven. They had seen the tenderness and the majesty of his character. For them the life of God looked forth through the life of their Lord. This was their unique experience. They had a privilege from which the succeeding world was forever barred.

When their Master was crucified, when he had risen from the dead, they were unable to



think of the heavenly Lord without thinking at the same time of the earthly Master. Thus the Gospels came to be written, because the apostles wanted to preserve the precious, the divine memorials of the temporal life of their risen Lord. They continued to think of Jesus in the heavens as they had seen him in time. Even the Fourth Gospel, while a philosophy of the career of Jesus, while dating his being from the bosom of the Father and conducting it after death back into the heart of the Eternal, while showing the earthly life of Jesus as an interlude between the eternal harmonies antecedent and consequent to that life, still touches and colors that sublime revelation of God with the rich and tender humanities in the temporal existence of the Lord. Look where you will in the record of the twelve apostles, you find emphasis upon the teaching, the character, the spirit, and the temporal life of Jesus. All this was hallowed by his death, all was transfigured by his resurrection, but in substance it abides as the gospel of the early apostles.

To the original disciples of Jesus his resurrection changed the entire aspect of the world. Henceforth it lay as in an everlasting sunset, traveling in the glow and fire of his sublime memory. Nature was transfigured through her association with him ; Galilee and Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth, were touched with endless pathos and moment. Human beings in all the sin and woe and tragedy of their lives were hallowed out of the divine sanctity of that life. A mystery of loveliness had vanished from the world, but the memory of it remained to illumine and chasten mankind. Never again could the disciples look upon the world as it had appeared to them before they knew Jesus ; never again could they see a Christless humanity ; they lived, suffered, achieved, and died in the divine dream into which Jesus had lifted mankind ; they beheld the world eternally transfigured in his risen and victorious life.

We can faintly follow them here. Occasionally a sublime spirit comes into our sphere of being ; once or twice in a lifetime it may

have been our privilege to behold the work and bearing of some indubitable son of God. We looked upon his face as if it had been the face of an angel; we felt the Divine presence in his total personality; we were moved to a hidden wonder and love as we drew near in friendship to him. Then perhaps came the sudden end. When we recovered our self-possession, we knew that he was indeed gone, but that for us he had left the world still in his everlasting evening glow. Such experiences enable us in a faint way to gain some idea of the light and peace in which the vanished Christ forever left the world for the original apostles who had known and loved him in the days of his flesh.

The temporal note is absent from Paul's experience. He never had any kind of contact with Jesus in life; he never saw, he did not know Jesus while on the earth. His first contact with Jesus is as the risen Lord, as the invisible Christ. His vision was never of the earthly Jesus; it was always and only of the heavenly Jesus. Paul's contact with Jesus is

identical with the contact that men to-day may have. He is, as I have said, the great representative of the privilege of the world after Christ had left the earth; he is our representative believer in Christ and, especially, in the risen Lord.

Paul asserts that he had seen Jesus, the Lord; his great challenge is, Have I not seen Jesus, our Lord? The story was known to all the churches which he had planted; it was known wherever he was known. He told it as often as opportunity offered, and in words of burning conviction and unforgettable power. In his great address before Agrippa he said: "Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad.

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." There were doubtless many similar experiences in the career of Paul. This is initial and fundamental. Upon this experience he issued his challenge, "Have I not seen Jesus, our Lord?"

Observe, first of all, that this man had first-hand contact only with the risen Lord; he had only second-hand contact with the earthly Lord; he was therefore surer of the heavenly Jesus than he could be of the earthly Jesus. In the reality of the earthly Jesus he believed on testimony; in the reality of the heavenly Jesus he believed on experience. He was as much surer of the heavenly Jesus than he was of the earthly Jesus as experience is surer than testimony. He appears to have been free from doubt as to the reality of the risen Christ. And the fact that Christ was alive after death made him confident as the servant of Christ that he and all his brethren would survive death and live together with the Lord in the heavenly world.

Now, so far as we have any contact at all with Jesus, it must be in this way. We have the record of his life and teaching, the record of what he said, of what he did, of what he suffered, of what he was. But the record is simply a symbol, a sublime memory. If we have contact with Jesus only through the record, we have contact only with the precious memorials of Jesus; we are still far away from him. We stand at this record of his life as the disciples stood at the empty tomb; to us as to them the salutation comes: "He is not here; for he is risen." If we are to have contact with the living Christ, it can be only after the manner of Paul. We must be met by him on our way through the world; we must hear his voice out of the invisible; we must get into dialogue with him in the Eternal; we must be arrested by an immediate question from him, "Why persecutest thou me?" We must question him in return,—"Who art thou, Lord?" We must hear his reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." This vision, under whatever form, is the only

first-hand contact that we can have with the living soul of Jesus Christ. And where this vision answers to Paul's in depth, in intensity, in power, men to-day may be as sure as he was of the heavenly Lord.

Notice next how Paul was able to believe in the reality of his vision. He knew that the world was full of dreams and delusions. He could not doubt the reality of his vision, and yet he must often ask himself his reason for continuing to believe in it. What account would he be likely to give to himself of this vision?

He would doubtless say that this vision had revolutionized his whole mind upon the subject of Jesus and his religion. He had been an enemy; he was turned into a friend. He had been a bitter and violent persecutor; he became a preacher and defender of that of which he had formerly made havoc. That vision changed his career.

He would doubtless add that this vision had changed his entire manner of thinking about God, his people, himself, the nations of man-

kind. That vision was the germ for him of a new philosophy of man's life and God's character. That vision took possession of him as a seed takes possession of the earth. It was alive in his mind, it grew there, it drew up into itself all his thoughts about God and man, about the past and the future. It became a mighty tree, a living organism of truth, a philosophy of our human world. The vision that had changed his career wrought this new, richer, and mightier mind within the man.

He would further say that it had changed his character. He had always loved righteousness; but before that vision came he had been mistaken often; he had been in great straits between the command of conscience and the clamor of passion; he had been brought in his struggle after the ideal life to the edge of despair; he had summed up the sad endeavor in the cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Mistaken, outward and formal in his idea of righteousness, defeated and broken-hearted in his struggle after it, he had been before that



vision came; after its visitation he had become clear and sound in his thoughts, deep as the nature of the soul in his insights, and in his pursuit of his goal, a conqueror and more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ. The fruits of the Spirit now abounded,—love, joy, patience, hope, sympathy with sinful and suffering men, above all, kindness and forbearance with stupidity and folly. That is nearly the supreme grace in a mighty nature, and that grace became regnant in Paul.

He would add still further the character of his services and sufferings. He had gone over a large part of the Roman Empire several times because of that vision. He had preached the gospel of Reconciliation through Jesus Christ from Damascus and Jerusalem, from Asia Minor through Europe as far as Spain. He had shaken from their pedestals the gods of Greece and Rome, he had established Christian faith in a new continent; and he had done it under the sense of obligation to that vision and because of his delight in its transcendent reality.

His sufferings in this service cannot be described, nor the sublime spirit in which they were borne. They are part of the world's highest canticle of love and woe, part of the supreme litany of supreme races, part of the deepest and rarest possession of mankind. Look in upon this great spirit through the words, "In labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils of my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." There is a window into a hero's soul; but for

his enemies, he never would have set this window there. He begins the story of his sufferings with the confession that in speaking of himself he is speaking as a fool, being compelled to this folly by foolish men. This career of triumphant gladness in a world of contradiction and sorrow came out of that vision.

The highest wonder has yet to be named. This man Paul was one of the great original personalities of the world. His nature was great in every way ; it was distinctly original. In its force it has effected more in the civilization of Europe than any other that can be named. Never did so great a personality sail the Mediterranean Sea or cover the surrounding shores with its journeys. And yet this mighty personality lived out of the superior and supernal personality given in that vision. He came to say that he lived, yet not he but Christ lived in him, that Christ was within him the hope of glory ; so complete, so continuous, so full of steadiness and rapt feeling, was this surrender of the soul of Paul in time to the soul of Jesus in eternity.

This is the outline of Paul's reason for his faith in the risen Lord. The Lord Jesus had changed him from a persecutor to a preacher of the gospel; he had changed the entire organism of his thinking; he had changed his experience from despair to triumph as a servant of the moral ideal; he had sent him over an empire as a prophet of the Eternal love; he had enabled him to endure nameless sufferings and glory in them that he might thereby show forth the power of his Master. Paul's life came out of his faith in the risen Lord. With such a life as issue, could he reasonably doubt the Divine reality of the cause? Not till something can come from nothing, not till wholesome living can come from delusions, not till it can be shown that all that is deepest and divinest in the life of man comes from lies, shall we dare to say that Paul's faith in the reality of his vision of the risen Lord is vain.

The question comes, Is this assurance of the risen Lord open to us? In reading his words, in dwelling upon the stories of his

resurrection, in pondering what he has been to his disciples in all these centuries, there has come upon us a vision of Jesus as alive and at the right hand of God. We now ask this question : How can we be sure that Jesus is alive, that he is the risen Lord ?

If we have met him on our way to an evil goal, if his spirit has risen out of his words and stood across the path of our evil progress, if he has arrested us in shameful thoughts or intentions, if he has blinded us with excess of light on some secret sin, or some duty that we have scorned, if he by his moral illumination and appeal has made it impossible for us to go on in our wickedness, if he has turned us from wild infatuation with error and wrong to duty and to God, there is one tremendous witness to the reality of our risen Lord. He has risen up like a new watershed in our existence ; he has turned our whole being in a new direction ; he has made it impossible that we should again flow where we have flowed, that we should again seek that old and evil goal.

Have we gone on from this initial experience as Paul did? Have we come to read the meaning of the soul, the family, the nation, the history of man, the total of our human existence, and the character of the Eternal through the eyes of Jesus? Have we come into a body of ideas of which he is the teacher and inspirer? Have we found under his influence duty a delight, obligation a privilege, service a song? Is there in progress within us a vast alienation from the selfish, the brutal life, a vast reconciliation to the will of God? If this or anything like this is true, there is a second witness to the reality of the risen Lord.

Have we ever done anything for his sake? Have we confessed his name before men, stood forth before the world in the solemn privilege of membership in his kingdom, given a cup of cold water because we saw in the needy one his brother, clothed the destitute, visited the sick, remembered the forgotten, gone on our way doing good following in his footsteps, holding forth through a just and tender char-

acter his word of life, joining with all who truly love him in the service of the souls of men, as poor yet making many rich, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as having nothing yet possessing all things? If this is the character of our life, or anything the least like this, we have still another witness to the reality of the Lord in heaven.

The strength of the entire New Testament is the assurance that Jesus is alive. The assurance came to the twelve through what they believed to be physical appearances. The assurance came to Paul through a vision, through an experience in his mind and soul. The assurance is the supreme thing, and concerning this all the apostles are at one. The assurance of Paul is mightier to-day because we may gain it for ourselves. We cannot see the empty grave, we cannot walk with Jesus from Jerusalem to Emmaus; we cannot hear him speak to us from the shore of the sea, calling us to dine. The form of assurance peculiar to the original apostles is inaccessible to us. If their faith becomes our faith, it is

through our faith in them. With the form of assurance for which Paul stands it is different. His whole new being was the witness of the truth of his faith; he had no eye-sight, no outward material evidence; it was all a transaction in his intellect and character. When we have his experience or something like it, we shall have his assurance. For those who do not think, the outward witness, the eye-sight of the apostles is easy; it is a witness that may be accepted by selfish and godless men. For men who think, who wonder how these things can be, the bodily resurrection of Jesus is a puzzle, and the peace longed for does not come. The inward witness from all the apostles, and especially from Paul, is nothing to the unspiritual man; it can be gained only through personal experience, only through renewal in Christ, only through service under him, only by the path of a great soul. To this our Lord is bringing us. If we will not rise into newness of life with Christ, we can never know him. When with him we stand at our being's



height, we shall know that our Redeemer liveth ; life comes from life, — the life of the body from the life of the body, the life of the soul from the life of the soul. If we live in Christ, if we live by him, when we look up we shall see him, according to his word, on the clouds of heaven, we shall see him as Stephen beheld him at the right hand of God.

I conclude, therefore, that the fate of Jesus and his gospel is in no way bound up with the fate of miracle. It is evident, even if naturalism is to control men's views of all history, that the really great things in Christ and his gospel abide. His teaching abides, his character is safe, his spiritual leadership is unquestioned. He is still our Prophet, Priest, and King. His risen and glorified life in God remains attested by the witness of life. Only the fringe of his evangelical career is torn away. We lose the stilling of the storm, the walking on the sea, the feeding of the multitudes, the raising of the widow's only son and the dead Lazarus. We lose something, no doubt, and the loss, if it should become

inevitable, will be painful to many. But even here there is evidence of the greatness of our Lord. That he wrought wonders upon the physical life of men is beyond dispute. That he gained access to the souls of the plain people by his marvelous power as the healer of physical distress is not open to question. That he took the imagination of the people captive is attested by the tradition of wonders that came to invest his career. To all serious minds, part of the evidence of the power of Jesus Christ will always be the epic of miracle embedded in his career. How great that epic is, it would be difficult to say ; of what divine things it is the reflection, men may one day become noble enough to discover.

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND MIRACLE

#### I

**W**HAT are the essential things in the faith, in the ideals, in the experience and hope of a disciple of Jesus Christ to-day? It may be said that the disciple of to-day tries to take his place in the school of Christ. Somehow the Master becomes to him a living presence; the recorded remark, sermon, and parable are heard as if from the lips of the Divine speaker; the time, the scene, and the events of the evangelical record yield the vision of the great Teacher. Other disciples surround the Lord, and among them the honest and devout disciple of to-day.

In the school of Christ, recovered by the religious imagination working upon the Gospels, the disciple of to-day tries to read the meaning of the universe and the purpose

and scope of human life through the mind of Jesus. He looks at the Infinite through the soul of Jesus and says with him, "Our Father who art in heaven"; he looks upon his fellow men through that same Divine soul, and he sees that they are his brothers, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; he looks again, and this time the vision of Jesus leads him to unite in one vast family the Father in heaven and his children in the earth. He is further led by his Teacher to see that the total good of man is conveyed in the great prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Thus the disciple of to-day tries to gain the vision of Jesus, to form his intellect in that vision, to make it the substance and spirit of his philosophy of human existence and of the universe in which that existence finds itself.

There is now a question of the moral nature to be considered, a relation of feeling and will to the vision of Jesus. The disciple of to-day who tries to think of God and man more and more as Christ thought of them sees that this

ideal involves two others. It sets before him the ideal of the heart and of the active spirit. He must more and more feel toward God and man as Jesus felt; he must more and more behave as Jesus behaved. He must aim to reproduce in himself the most perfect trust in the righteous will of God and take into his being out of the being of the Highest his eternal magnanimity. He must consider the world of men as on the whole a noble but awful tragedy; he must regard it with patience, sympathy, compassion; his heart must aim at becoming more and more the heart of Christ.

To this he must add the force of a Christian will. He entertains his Master's vision of the kingdom of God, and toward the progressive realization of that kingdom in the face of the selfishness and brutality of the world he consecrates himself. This is the great test, as it is the chief privilege, of his discipleship. He sees that finally all the worth of the intellect and the heart come to the test of action. Religion is only a potentiality while it remains vision and passion; only as vision and passion

press for expression in action do they become real. The Christian religion is ultimately a vision and a passion that declare themselves as true through the floodgates of the triumphant good will. Good will is the last and highest beatitude of God; good will is the final grace of the Lord Jesus; good will is the ultimate and sure test of Christian discipleship yesterday, to-day, and forever.

In addition to faith and ideals the disciple of Jesus has hopes. His greatest hope for himself is that some day he shall answer in moral integrity and purity to the soul of his Master. His greatest hope for human society is the advent of the new heaven and the new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness. Out of these sovereign moral hopes comes the hope of life everlasting, the conservation of all genuine love, the renewal of earth's essential relationships in the eternal world, the redemption of man, and the society of man redeemed in the heavenly sphere.

In this account of the faith, the ideals, and the hopes of the disciple of Christ to-

day, I have said nothing about miracle. Is this an oversight, or is it natural or right? The question may now be raised upon what do Christian men and women live to-day? Do we live upon miracle or upon the Spirit? Do we depend upon the revelation of Spirit through the miraculous or through the natural? Such a question brings one back to the method of God in dealing with human beings to-day. Miracles do not occur in our generation. Mortal sickness is not healed, our dead are not brought back to life, there is no voice that stills the tempests on our seas, no one can bid us walk upon the waters and save us when we fail through want of faith, no gracious hand to-day multiplies the meagre food-supply in starving homes.

The interest of suffering men and women to-day in these miracles of our Lord must be a pathetic interest. The cry must come up from bereaved parents, "He restored to life the little girl of Jairus, why does he not restore our child?" "He raised from the bier in Nain the widow's only son, why does he not give me

back my strong staff and beautiful rod?" cries another solitary mourner. He had compassion upon the bereaved sisters in Bethany and raised their brother from death, and has he no pity upon similar sorrow now? The lame, the halt, the blind, and the leper are still with us, but there is no helper. What avails it for our sufferers to read of the deliverance wrought for a few of the multitudes that suffered in that ancient time? For that ancient world the relief was meagre when measured against the immeasurable need and agony. And when one surveys the world to-day, even that mitigation is nowhere to be found; among sane minds it is nowhere expected. The natural order is supreme; and we do not dream that God will work miracles in our behalf, or in behalf of any man. When our children are taken out of our arms, we do not look for their return. We say with a great sorrowing father three thousand years ago, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." There is no discharge in this war; there is none, and we expect none. We in our gen-



eration are beset behind and before and on either side by a natural order fixed as fate.

This sense of law determines the spiritual life of reasonable men. Whether we accept or deny the miracles of Jesus, we pass them by, or we treat them as symbols of spiritual truth. We do not live upon the wonders of the Lord; we live upon his words, his thoughts, his prayers, his spirit. We commune with him on the way. The secret of life is to know him, to share his vision, to become partakers of his passion, to rise with him to newness of life. We support ourselves by his great utterances: "He that believeth on me shall not see death. Because I live, ye shall live also. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The experience of Paul sets the ideal for all disciples: "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Here we are out of the region of miracle; we are in a far higher world, we are in the world of soul and love and triumphant life.

I have spoken of Paul as the most impressive witness for the faith in the risen Lord.

I now say that the chief significance of this faith for Paul was in the moral assurance it brought in his fight for righteousness. He had indeed seen Jesus ; he knew that his Lord was risen and reigning, but beyond this, the chief moment of Jesus to Paul was as the revealer and mediator of the Infinite righteousness. Dearly had Paul loved righteousness from his earliest years, and sorely had he failed to gain it. The vision of Jesus became for him a new conception of righteousness, a new power of achievement and a new hope. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that the significance of Jesus to Paul was significance for the spirit. His great words are, "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more."

In the writings ascribed to the Apostle John great emphasis is laid upon the fact that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. The historical life of Jesus is inexpressibly dear and important to this apostle. It is dear and important as the expression of the sovereign soul of his Master, as the revelation of the

eternal love of God. His greatest words are : God is light, and in him is no darkness at all " ; and to this corresponds the self-characterization of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, for which we are plainly indebted to the same writer : " I am the light of the world : he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." The other words of this apostle, which some will consider even greater than those just quoted, are : " God is love." And of this eternal love Jesus Christ is the one adequate assurance. Here again the whole higher character of Christianity is in the realm of the spirit.

If we look into the minds of the greater witnesses of our faith in Christian history, we shall find the same general result. For Clement of Alexandria and Origen Jesus was revealer and life-giver. The experience of Augustine is a new version of the experience of Paul ; the gospel was a message to his sinful soul, a message that became a deliverance. Augustine's greatest book is his " Confessions " ; it contains the heart of his Christian faith, and

into its words he has poured the fullness of his mind and spirit. It is a book that can never grow old; it is full of God, full of Christ, full of the soul to whom God in Christ had become perpetual vision and eternal solace. Luther goes back through Augustine to Paul, and righteousness by faith is the cry with which he awakened Europe. Calvin dwells not upon miracle, but upon the sovereign God. Indeed, wherever one looks among the really great souls, one finds them building either upon ideas, or upon the gracious experience into which these ideas are translated by the Holy Spirit. Cardinal Newman writes an acute and sophistical essay on ecclesiastical miracles, and good men pass it by in pity. He writes of the visitations of God to the souls of men, and the world still reads what is written. Newman, the consummate special pleader for incredible dogmas, is the subject of compassion; Newman, the religious genius, is dear to the whole Christian church. In his greatest book Bushnell writes a chapter on miracles, in which to-day no one has any real

interest; he writes sermons for the human spirit that will be a possession for many generations. Edwards is more and more engaging profound minds, not so much on account of his scheme of doctrine, as on account of the depth and splendor of his religious experience. The greatest influence on Christian faith in the nineteenth century came from Schleiermacher and Maurice; and in both these thinkers the chief excellence is range of spiritual vision and depth of life.

If I am right in these remarks, religious men are men of the spirit, Christian men are men of the spirit, and the sphere in which they live is not the world of miracle, but the world of Divine life. For them law is the speech of God, and as our own tongue in its order of moods and tenses, in its living and beautiful idioms, is the best possible instrument for the expression of the thought and love and character of friend or parent or child, as we should be put to confusion if the human soul in its regard for us should depart from the law of reasonable speech, so modern religious men think of God.

The order of nature is his speech; its laws are the idioms of his tongue; its fixed ways are the steadfast manner of his language; and in and through this instrument he discovers to the religious soul his mind and heart. The natural order is thus crowded with ideas; through it ideas break as from human speech; from it they work their power as from the countenance of man. Here indeed we have our chief example of the union of mechanism and spirit. Human life is a mechanism of cause and effect, it is life under law — anatomical, physiological, economical, terrestrial. It is an organism in strict subjection to law; birth, growth, maturity, decline, and death are events in a living organism under law; but as Aristotle said long ago, the truth or meaning of this organism is spirit. Death is organism minus the spirit that gives it truth and meaning. The infant becomes to its mother, when only a few months old, a mind and heart. The charm of its manner is the charm of a soul learning to express itself through the law-bound organism in which it

lives. The smile of an infant is a fact in physiology; it is an event under physiological law; and at the same time it is a radiant disclosure of spirit. Again and again the mother will work and wait for the contraction of those muscles, as men were wont to wait till the descent of an angel troubled the pool, that the soul of her child may become radiantly visible. Through life the same law holds. Looks of infinite tenderness are the supreme signs between those who love; these looks at meeting and parting, at all the crises and surprises of existence, in life and in death, are events of physiology; they take place in a purely natural way; they are the orderly phases of the physical organism, and think of the worlds of meaning, high, solemn, beautiful, that they bear and utter. The body of a friend is the noble and dear mechanism through which the soul declares its inviolable order of truth, love, character. When Ruth revealed her soul to Naomi, she did it through word, voice, accent, attitude, manner, look. These were all regular phases of

her physical existence ; and how the interior world of honor stood in them, and how great they became as the servants of that world : “ Intreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God : where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.” There in human life is mechanism in the service of spirit, and the mechanism is hallowed by the burden that it is made to bear. When the blind Œdipus hears the voice of Antigone and is led forth by her, when Lear, bound upon a wheel of fire, looks up into the face of Cordelia, does not the mechanism of the human body declare a world of soul ? In our human life mechanism and spirit meet ; here this mechanism is not in the way of spirit ; it is an essential servant, and as such it stands in honor.

This is the simplest path to the world of the Eternal Spirit. In the cosmos and in



human society he dwells and utters himself. We construe the universe in the light of our own life; we are mechanism and spirit; in our existence mechanism is the indispensable servant of spirit; and so we dare to think of God. His laws in nature are his ways of revealing the content of his mind there; his ways with man are the fixed order through which he utters his regard for him. When man becomes a religious soul, when love flows between the finite soul and the Infinite, the order of life and death, the mechanism of nature in which our being is set, is transfigured. In that order there is felt the pressure of God's hand, the fullness of God's smile, the infinite meaning in the wild tragedy of existence, the depth of God's good will.

Look now at the career of Jesus from this point of view. His body is the mechanism that bears the burden of his great soul. His soul is an order of thoughts and feelings and purposes that bears in itself the consciousness of God and his thoughts and feelings and purposes toward man. The life of Jesus serves

a double end: it expresses his soul; it also expresses the soul of God as God lives in him. All this is independent of miracle; it does not even suggest miracle. Mechanism of body is the basis of this expression of Jesus as he lives in God. The word was made flesh; the organism of the body became the revealer of the spirit. At every step forward in his career this is the central truth in the life of Jesus. He spoke, he lived a human life under law: and at every turn his speech, his life, bore the burden of a divine meaning. His infancy in Bethlehem, his boyhood and youth in Nazareth, his public ministry of teaching and healing, the phases of his organic existence, were the instruments of his spirit, and of God as God lived in his spirit. Thus through the temporal life of Jesus in part and in whole the Eternal was uttered. The effect upon the religious soul of the natural order of the life of Jesus as the bearer and revealer of the life of God may find its symbol in the effect upon the penitent thief of these words: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Here is

the mechanism of the human voice. Could any miracle equal the sweetness and the power of that mechanism? Could any wonder bear to a soul in darkness the assurance of the Eternal conveyed by that mechanism? As was the voice of Jesus then, such was his whole life, an order of nature revealing the eternal kingdom of the spirit.

## II

The final cause of the discipline in doubt to which Christian men are subjected in our time would seem to be that they may be brought back to the world of the spirit that fills and transfigures the natural order of the cosmos and of human life. The great condition of this mighty return to the immediate world of the spirit is freedom. For the first time since the apostolic age, the Christian religion is held and studied in our day in the atmosphere of freedom. For Protestantism, all religion is the subject of study in the world of freedom; and for Catholicism, religion is engaged in a determined struggle to regard

itself in the light of the free intellect. This is something new under the sun. Never has freedom of mind so reigned in the things of the spirit as it reigns to-day. Indeed, compulsion has reigned so long in the sphere of faith that great souls have been again and again tormented with the question whether they were believers on authority, or on insight into the essential nature of their belief. Never till this day has faith had the opportunity that now confronts it, the opportunity to declare through complete intellectual freedom what is incidental in its own life and what is essential and permanent. For Christian faith this inexpressible privilege has been long in coming, and now that it is here we hail it as a vast hope. This hope may be to many a terrible visitation of fear. Even then it cannot be denied that freedom has arrived. What Kant said of his age is much more true of our age: "This may be best characterized as the age of criticism — a criticism to which everything must submit." A new mood has arisen in the sphere of religion ; it fills the educated

world; it reaches the entire intelligence of the time. Is this new mood for better, or for worse? What of the future of our faith at its hands? What of the future of those beliefs that have hitherto been the perennial fountain, or at least the indispensable channel, of our greatest inspirations? Are we permitted now to work and to feel as of old? Are we forbidden to think as of old? How long can work and feeling go forward when thought has lost its hold upon the Eternal? Does the change in thought mean only a vaster thought and thus a profounder feeling, and a mightier activity for Christian righteousness? In the new mood of the age, are we confronted, like ancient Israel, by a possible blessing and a possible curse? In our hope and in our fear is there balm in Gilead? Is there a physician there? The intellectual world, the spiritual world, the Christian world is in movement. Whither is it bound? Who is its leader and Lord? When the sea breaks its immemorial bounds, is there any law or force upon which one may look for the con-

trol of the fearful flood? When Christian scholars, teachers, preachers, disciples of the Lord have, in one degree or another, abandoned immemorial traditions, is there any Guide on whom we may rely for the conservation of the best in history, and for the control and happy issue of the whole daring movement of man's spirit?

There is indeed much confusion to-day in the field of belief, and much need of patience. Parents have dedicated to the ministry of Christ the son whose entire existence has been covered by their prayers. They have sent him to college, and there he has stood in the heart of the world's great debate between theism and atheism, a knowable God and an unknowable, history as an optimism and history as the interminable desert of despair. In college he has been trained to think, to question every affirmation, to try the spirits that he might know their worth. Is it strange that, under this discipline, — and there is no other discipline that is intellectually decent, — their son should come forth with a high spirit, a vigor-

ous understanding, and a somewhat attenuated body of belief? They send this son to the divinity school. The mood of the age is still with him. In the modern seminary he stands in the heart of the great debate about the Bible. How came the Old Testament to be what it is? How came the New Testament to be what it is? How much is authentic history? How much, if any, is myth or legend or the accretion of the creative imagination of after-times? In answer to these questions their son hears a multitude of conflicting tongues, and Babel itself seems peaceful and beautiful order compared with this unsilenceable and endless uproar. Again, is it strange that their son, when he presents himself for ordination as a minister of Jesus Christ, should be somewhat uncertain, and perhaps unsatisfactory, in his statement of faith? They cannot blame him; they know the honor of his soul, the integrity of his intellect, the deep and tender veneration of his heart for his Master; they know that he stands ready to confess him in service and in

sacrifice and unto tears and blood. They cannot blame him; why should they blame his teachers, why should they blame any one? The mood of the age is upon us all; whither shall we go from its spirit, or whither shall we flee from its presence? If we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall the mood of the time confront us. If we ascend up into heaven, it is there; if we make our bed in hell, it is there; it is with us in the darkness and in the light; it is the shadow of God in the mind of educated man; as the shadow of God we must behold it, we must implore its meaning, we must beg for its name.

The profoundest meaning of the vast and restless mood that is upon us, I believe to be the Divine intention to throw us back upon God, the Holy Ghost. If natural law seems to be inviolable, if there appears to be no longer any room left for miracle, it is that the whole creation may appear miraculous, the garment that God is weaving for himself on the roar-



ing looms of time, under the eyes of the living. For a few miracles hard to grasp, we are bidden behold a miraculous universe, where all things depend upon, where all things reveal, the mystery of the Infinite will. No man is intellectually justified in denying the possibility of the miracles of Jesus; he does not know enough to deny. No man has a right to make the glory of Christianity depend upon the miracle. Does the Fourth Gospel mean nothing in setting the life of Jesus into the life of the world, and back into the life of the universe, and up into the life of the Eternal God, without the aid of miracle? Consider which is the grander, the story of the incarnation according to Luke, or the same story according to John.

If the Bible appears to be no longer an infallible book, it is that men may come to know the Divine inspirer of it. The Bible seems to me to have gained immeasurably in the process of scientific examination. The humanity of the Bible is monumental; and this monumental humanity enables us to lay

hold with new assurance upon the Eternal humanity. "The burdens of the Bible old" are still out of the Infinite. In the lyric and epic utterance of supreme souls one still hears the accent of the Holy Ghost. In the oracle of the prophet, in the epistle of the apostle, and in the eternal wisdom and tenderness of the teaching of Jesus, we still rise as on wings into the presence of the Most High. Theories about the Bible are born and die like the swarms of insects in summer; but the Bible in its really great books remains what it has always been — the monumental witness to the presence in man of the Holy Ghost. If we live in God, we shall see that the Bible lives in God; if God lives in us, we shall know that God lives in the Bible.

Even the uncertainty about the person of Jesus Christ, which I deplore, seems to me to be, in a way, providential. "It is expedient for you that I go away"; so spoke the Lord. The religion of Jesus Christ is, after all, the religion of the Holy Ghost. The church is the church of the risen Lord; the church

began in the consciousness of the risen and reigning Christ. It can never be, without outrage upon history, without revolt from Christian reason, the church of the dead Christ. With this fountain of organized Christianity sure, with this consciousness rising and terminating in the Lord who abolished death, we have nothing to fear. Behind that, below that, sane criticism cannot go. And with this consciousness as channel, there comes in upon us, if we will but open the gates, the floods of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit thus becomes the hope of the church. If we have the Holy Spirit, he will guide us into all truth; he will recover to faith and life the truth that the church may from time to time lose. Thinking, believing, doing, living in the strength of the Holy Ghost — there is no hope save in that experience; and for the soul and for the church in that experience, there is nothing but hope. What if all the criticism and uncertainty of the age shall prove a Divine discipline toward this issue? What is the final beatitude for man but that

he shall live and move and have his being full of love and awe, in God? For what do we hope when we pray that the tabernacle of God may be with men? For what do we long when, in the language of the Apocalypse, we behold the holy city, the New Jerusalem, with no temple therein, save the soul of God omnipresent and omnipotent, in the social life of the race?

The outgoing mariner leaves much behind. The dear shores fade from his sight; the beloved land sinks deeper and deeper under the horizon; but these shores and that land do not cease to be; they remain part of the order of the world, and the buoyant and benign sea goes with him, floating him on its joyous floods, and fanning him with its strong winds, till he anchors in the harbor whither he is bound. The recorded gospel, the recorded Christ, we leave behind as the swift years roll, as the great centuries pass. That Divine life in Galilee and in Judea is far away from our time. We may weep that it is forever receding from the successive

generations of men ; but we must not forget that it is part of the history of the race, that it is the abiding and the supreme human memorial, and the glorious deep of the Holy Ghost goes forward with us ; it is under the keel of the church. Its currents are all toward good. Its winds are the prevailing forces in all progress ; and with this element under us, and with these inspirations behind us, filling the sails of faith, and blowing into white heat the great furnaces of love, we have everything to hope and nothing to fear.

The secret of existence for the individual Christian and for the whole body of Christians is in a life in the life of God ; in a life that cannot be plucked out of his hand, that cannot be torn from fellowship with him. The Christ of yesterday and the Christ of to-morrow are in the keeping of the Christ of to-day. The divine past and the divine future are safe, utterly safe, when held in the divine present. God is our refuge, a present help in time of trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and the sea roar and be troubled.

The planet goes forever forward, but it takes with it its atmosphere, and when the storms are still, it looks through that atmosphere, as through a vast window, upon the numberless shining worlds among which it rolls. Let the moving church take with it the faith, the experience, the protection, the infinite gift of the Holy Ghost. Let it roll forward in the heart of this mystery of encasing deity; let it view all worlds of science and art and philosophy and government, all the shining moods of human culture, and all the blasted survivals of departed glory, through the infinite transparency and peace of the Eternal Spirit.

### III

If now we raise the question, How are we to create belief in Christ and his gospel to-day, I know of no better approach to the final answer to that question than by a sympathetic study of Arnold's poem, "Rugby Chapel." We recall at once the vision of the dead father in the gloom of the autumn evening:—

Coldly, sadly descends  
The autumn evening. The field  
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts  
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,  
Fade into dimness apace,  
Silent ; — hardly a shout  
From a few boys late at their play !  
The lights come out in the street,  
In the school-room windows ; — but cold,  
Solemn, unlighted, austere,  
Through the gathering darkness, arise  
The chapel-walls, in whose bound  
Thou, my father ! art laid.

We recall, too, the poet's recoil from the  
gloom of the scene as he thinks of the radi-  
ant vigor and the buoyant cheerfulness of his  
father : —

Such thou wast ! and I stand  
In the autumn evening, and think  
Of bygone autumn with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round  
Since thou arosest to tread,  
In the summer-morning, the road  
Of death, at a call unforeseen,  
Sudden. For fifteen years,  
We who till then in thy shade

Rested as under the boughs  
Of a mighty oak, have endured  
Sunshine and rain as we might,  
Bare, unshaded, alone,  
Lacking the shelter of thee !

From this vision there flows faith in the  
persistence of that soul, faith that some-  
where, —

Still thou performest the word  
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live —  
Prompt, unwearied, as here !

Then the poet turns to consider the course of  
the life of mortal men on the earth. There is,  
first, the aimless, unmeaning life that lives in  
vanity and dies unregarded. There is, second,  
the life of the valiant, victorious individualist  
who breaks away from his companions, leaves  
them to perish in the storm, and who alone  
comes to his goal. There is, third, the Chris-  
tian hero ; let us listen to the poet again : —

But thou wouldst not *alone*  
Be saved, my father ! *alone*  
Conquer and come to thy goal,  
Leaving the rest in the wild.



We were weary, and we  
Fearful, and we in our march  
Fain to drop down and to die.  
Still thou turnedst, and still  
Beckonedst the trembler, and still  
Gavest the weary thy hand !

If, in the paths of the world,  
Stones might have wounded thy feet,  
Toil or dejection have tried  
Thy spirit, of that we saw  
Nothing — to us thou wast still  
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm !  
Therefore to thee it was given  
Many to save with thyself ;  
And, at the end of thy day,  
O faithful shepherd ! to come,  
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

Here is the human life as leader, inspirer, saviour of other human lives ; here is the way of faith. The hero whom we have known, the man of God, the lover of his kind, the helper of the weak, enables us to renew the vision of the servants of God and man in the past, enables us, through all the precious memorials of their lives, to behold and believe in the mighty succession of the

witnesses for the Eternal, lifts us to the consciousness of Jesus and his kingdom, to the consciousness of God and his divine regard for man. The greatest miracle that might be wrought would appear impotent in the presence of the living, reasonable witness for the things of the spirit, for the things of Christ, of a great and good man. What we need to renew our faith in the Highest in the universe, in Jesus the highest in time, is not conversion to faith in the miraculous, but the privilege of seeing again God in Christ working in the thought and feeling and action of men of our own day. The contemporary Christian is the best guide to the historic Master; the contemporary communicant of the Eternal is the highest witness for the reality of the reigning Christ and his kingdom of love. Arnold was spare in his positive beliefs, but here he lays in clear light and peace the way of the soul to the richest faith.

And through thee I believe  
 In the noble and great who are gone;

. . . . .

Yes ! I believe that there lived  
Others like thee in the past,  
Not like the men of the crowd  
Who all round me to-day  
Bluster or cringe, and make life  
Hideous, and arid, and vile ;  
But souls temper'd with fire,  
Fervent, heroic, and good,  
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Ye alight in our van ! at your voice,  
Panic, despair, flee away.  
Ye move through the ranks, recall  
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,  
Praise, re-inspire the brave !  
Order, courage, return ;  
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,  
Follow your steps as ye go.  
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
Strengthen the wavering line,  
Stablish, continue our march,  
On, to the bound of the waste,  
On, to the City of God !

Two great principles underlie this whole discussion of miracle and religion. These are the scientific conception of law and the religious conception of the immanence of God

in the cosmos and in man. The scientific conception of law as a generalization from a wide induction of facts was presented in the early part of this discussion. The religious conception of the immanence of God in the cosmos and in man has been basal in our consideration of miracle and the belief in God, in our examination of miracle in relation to Jesus and his gospel, and in our remarks upon the world in which religious men live to-day. The immanence of God in the cosmos and in man does not make miracle an impossibility. There may be more than one version of the active will of the Most High. It leaves miracle in the category of the logically possible, where it is left by the scientific conception of law. But just as the scientific conception of law tends more and more to reduce miracle to a bare logical possibility, so the religious conception of the immanence of God in his universe tends more and more to make miracle superfluous. Since God is in every mode of action in the cosmos and in man ; since even now he is closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet ; since

Yes ! I believe that there lived  
Others like thee in the past,  
Not like the men of the crowd  
Who all round me to-day  
Bluster or cringe, and make life  
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On, to the City of God !

Two great principles underlie this whole discussion of miracle and religion. These are the scientific conception of law and the religious conception of the immanence of God

in the cosmos and in man. The scientific conception of law as a generalization from a wide induction of facts was presented in the early part of this discussion. The religious conception of the immanence of God in the cosmos and in man has been basal in our consideration of miracle and the belief in God, in our examination of miracle in relation to Jesus and his gospel, and in our remarks upon the world in which religious men live to-day. The immanence of God in the cosmos and in man does not make miracle an impossibility. There may be more than one version of the active will of the Most High. It leaves miracle in the category of the logically possible, where it is left by the scientific conception of law. But just as the scientific conception of law tends more and more to reduce miracle to a bare logical possibility, so the religious conception of the immanence of God in his universe tends more and more to make miracle superfluous. Since God is in every mode of action in the cosmos and in man ; since even now he is closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet ; since

his intelligent will is the ground of the cosmos and all its phases; since his conscience is in the conscience of man, what room is there for miracle, or what need? Miracle is the natural sequence of the transcendental conception of God. The transcendent God makes the cosmos and man, fits them up with power so that they run of themselves; he is not in them, he is a God living beyond them. They have no immediate value for the soul that would find God, they have only a representative value, and as they are degenerate, that representative value is sadly impaired. If God is to be known at first-hand, according to this idea, it must be through miracle. Thus Jesus must come into the world in a miraculous way; thus his career as teacher, doer, and sufferer must be embedded in miracle. The natural order in the cosmos and in man is an order devoid of God; the return of God and his immediate presentation to man is not and cannot be without miracle. In a word, this I understand to be the philosophy that makes miracle a necessity of faith. Now that the

philosophy is no longer recognized as true, the inference as to the need of miracle is no longer seen to be valid.

I have conducted my discussion in accommodation to the fears of many good men whom I deeply respect. I have been concerned to show that the Christian religion is essentially independent of miracle. In this attempt I have taken the ground assigned by the thinkers who do not believe in miracle. So far as need be, I have indicated my own position. While I hold the scientific conception of law and the religious conception of the immanence of God in his universe, I do not admit that these ideas render miracle an impossibility. They leave it in the category of the logically possible, with the further impression that it is naturally and religiously improbable. I am still further free to confess that miracle is no part of my working philosophy of life, not because I deny its reality, but because I cannot be sure of its reality, and I wish to live as far as possible among the things that are sure, and among the things



about which sureness is a reasonable hope. That I may see for myself, that I may help others to see, that religion is independent of miracle, I accept in a provisional way the denial of miracle as the basis of debate. Miracle is myth; so it is said by a multitude of scholars and thinkers; and we allow this contention to stand. These thinkers assert that natural law rules over all; and we accept the assertion as true. On this ground it has been shown that mechanism is the vehicle of Spirit; the world as natural law carries within it the Eternal God. The flying wheels of being have their motion and life in him; it is still true that he makes the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice; it is still true that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, are from him. The order of life and death is the expression of his Will; unalterable as that order is, it cannot keep God from the soul, or the soul from God. Within the iron circle of natural law it is possible to-day, as it was three thousand years ago, to sing:—

The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want.  
 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures :  
 He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
 He restoreth my soul :  
 He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for  
     his name's sake.  
 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
     shadow of death,  
 I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me :  
 Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

This is the triumphant insight of the religious soul. The parable is the natural life of the sheep and the shepherd. The spiritual experience behind the parable is man in the natural order of the world guided, tended, comforted, and kept by the Eternal lover and possessor of man's soul. In this parable of the possibilities of the soul under the natural order, alive and aflame with God as it is, the whole higher spirit of the Old Testament survives as an abiding and precious possession.

If it be doubted whether this can be true of the New Testament, let those who doubt stand again under the cross. Let them look

upon the Supreme sufferer, oblivious of his own agony, going forth to the penitent thief in the great assurance: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Let them look again and behold him going forth in the fullness of pity to the brutal men who nail him to the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let them look still again, and this time let them watch his spirit, still regardless of its own woe, entering the heart of his suffering mother, whom he thus intrusts to the care of the disciple whom he loved: "Woman, behold, thy son! Son, behold, thy mother!" Let them listen with bowed head and in profoundest awe to the final words: "It is finished." "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Here is the process of natural law at its blackest; here is the reign of mechanism as a reign of terror; and yet, in all history, is there any disclosure of the Eternal love and pity so clear, so dear, so great as this?

When the night of death is past; when the

true light of Christian discipleship is once more shining ; when the scattered and appalled apostles are recalled and reassured ; when in their lives the promise is fulfilled, " I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you " ; when in the depth and wonder of their experience and in the might of their service the words unfold their truth : " Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," we see again through the natural order the sovereign soul of the risen Lord. In life and in death the Lord is with us ; in life and in death we are the Lord's, and the gospel that we still preach is the old eternal gospel, Immanuel, God in the world and the world in God.

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## CHAPTER V

### AN ETERNAL GOSPEL

#### I

OUR age has been concerned to an amazing extent with the local and temporal side of religion. Religion is an historic phenomenon; as such it has expressed itself in institutions, rites, beliefs, literature. This expression of religion may be called its temporal side; its institutions belong among the social forms of human life, its rites are a part of the general custom of the world, its beliefs are a phase of the philosophy of existence and the universe, its books have their place in the literature of the race. To this temporal aspect of religious faith probably more scientific attention has been devoted during the last fifty years than in any similar period in the history of mankind. The scientific scholar has appeared, and his special concern has been with

the literature of religion, its texts, documents, compositions, and with the history of these and the ideas embodied in them. The method of this investigation has been that common to all men of modern education, first-hand ascertainment of fact, and inference in accord with the fact. The presupposition underlying the scholar's work and giving general character to it has been a naturalistic conception of the cosmos.

What, now, is the justification for the subjection of the temporal side of religion to this new and searching examination? In reply it may be said that there are two justifications, one scientific, and the other religious. The scientific desire to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is of itself a sufficient reason for the investigation. The scholar's work is here seen to be part of the scientific activity of the world; it has behind it the impulse of all true science, love of truth and the quenchless desire to know it. Whether that truth shall be favorable to human interests or not, does not here enter into the question.

What are the facts, and what do they mean in the historic process? For the scientific intellect these are the main questions, and in the attempt to meet them an amazing world of activity has been called into being.

In addition to this scientific consideration there is another. There is the religious belief that things eternal are seen through things temporal, that space and time in all their rich variety, color, and movement are servants of the Highest. This belief leads to the expectation that a correct version of the temporal, in respect to any religion, would prepare the way for a new and a more influential conception of the Eternal. Here is a new fountain of enthusiasm for the devout scholar. In his textual criticism, his analysis and rearrangement of documents, his assignment of books to their proper place in the process of human development, he is preparing the way for a closer vision of the coming of the kingdom of God. It is the hope of serving this ultimate end that turns the detail and drudgery of his work into poetry; that end shines

through the entire world in which he works, — a world of confusion, sorrow, and contradiction, — and that, like the sun, fills it with splendor and life.

While all this is true, it must be added that little has been done in our age toward the profounder vision of the Eternal in religion. It is humiliating that here we can do no more than prepare the way of the Lord; that we are fit for criticism, but not for insight, able to consider in scientific order what others have created, but unable to bring forth ourselves; that we are greater than the men of old in research, but immeasurably beneath them in the richness and reality of religion. The rôle of the prophet in the cleft of the rock, witnessing, so far as mortal man may, the pageant of the Eternal goodness, is not for us; we are content to investigate the tradition of this high experience, to call attention to the cleft in the rock and the rubbish-heap at either end. Religion as a life and as a literature has its greatest exemplars and masterpieces in the past; to-day the soul is



not alive as it has been, and too often the creative spirit is lost in a world of confused detail.

It must not be forgotten that in great religions the human spirit is creative in all the spheres of life, in thought, in feeling, and in character. Religion is primarily an affair of being, exalted and greatened being, with the pulse of creative power beating at its heart. As in some great mountain one notes a unique relation to the infinite sky and a capacity out of that sky to renew its splendor, so in a soul sublime in its religious consciousness we observe a sovereign sense of the Eternal and an unmeasured capacity to re-create life, on a nobler plan and on a vaster scale, from the Eternal. "There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Man's nature as a religious being would seem to be a system of capacities in the favoring presence of the Eternal; capacities for mistake, suffering, entanglement in the tragedy of time; capacities for escape, reconciliation with the moral ideal, achieve-

ment, growth, and hope; and religion at its best is the victorious consciousness of this order of capacities in man as man lives in God. It is this great soul of religion that is in danger to-day, the movement of the spirit of man in the Eternal, the movement of the Eternal in the spirit of man.

Much in the custom of religion tends to deaden men to its essential spirit. The monumental expressions of religion in other ages become substitutes for present vision, passion, and character; the Bible that should educate, inspire, set free in original relations to God absolves the soul from experimentation, insight, and discovery. We repeat the prayers of the saints, but we do not covet their creative heart; we adopt liturgies because they lessen the burden of the ministers of the gospel, and we fail to see that in so doing we rob them of their highest privilege. How the world looks from the mountain-tops of genuine, ardent prayer, they know who have been there; we encourage our preachers to dispense with this toil and the supreme ex-

perience to which it leads, and to adopt and repeat the reports of other men's experience. We build creeds to aid faith, and thereby deny to faith the infinite and intellectual freedom and hope there. We enrich our service with ritual and ceremony till in the pomp and circumstance of worship the God who is spirit and truth is forgotten. We lament the loss of belief in angels and seek to revive the doctrine of familiar spirits ; we speak of the pathos of these vanished worlds of faith, and do not perceive the gain to man and the grandeur of this abolition of all intermediaries. To-day man leans upon the Eternal strength ; to-day he stands face to face with God, and this issue to which the Holy One is leading us we confuse with the custom of religion in our poor hands.

Even the legitimate and essential labors of the scholar are apt to become an impediment. His vocation is research into fact, and while it is true that every fact has its ideal side, like the eagle's egg in the nest, only awaiting the brooding intellect to become a living thought, yet the vocation of the scholar in

our time, especially in the sphere of religion, is not quick to kindle the brooding mind. Learning and insight should go together, but they frequently part company. Never in the history of religion has this separation been more painfully frequent than now. The ways of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man are not in the vision of many who yet write learned books whose whole value depends on the previous question. The earth and the soul have their orbits; poor is the geologist who forgets the wide and wild path on which his planet runs, and poor is the scholar who becomes oblivious of man's inherent and incessant relation to the Eternal. The frivolous custom of religion is aided by the scholar as he falls a victim to detail, as he fails to conceive history in terms of the ideal that struggles within it, a living but imprisoned force, as he forgets to think of religion in time *sub specie aeternitatis*.

It has been said that modern religion is an imitation and an echo. In science, in literature, in music, in political and industrial

organization the modern man of the West is original ; in religion he is not original. I think the modern man is superficial and imitative here because his faith has become formal and trivial. The work of the scholar in the history of religion should be of the greatest consequence ; we have seen why it so often falls below its possibility. The formal and closed nature of religion, as we conceive it, is another aspect of the same distress. The modern man is not doing himself justice in this supreme sphere. He is here a poor traditionalist, a pale Protestant, a literal Christian minus the central idea of the Christian faith, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The adoption into intellect and life of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit would bring back into faith creative power, and the modern mind, free and great in so many spheres of human interest, would appear in the sphere of religion in answering greatness.

An immense amount of good work is done by all branches of the Christian church. Education, public service, works of mercy, all the

higher interests of the nation, have in the Christian churches their best friends. The strongest defenders of humanity and the mightiest foes of inhumanity are in these churches. Practical idealism burns there with a steady and powerful light; Christian visions for society and Christian pity and hope abound. Yet it must be said that these precious things are confined to the few. The effective force in the churches is still a Gideon's army, a resolute but meagre remnant of the total enrolled membership. The cry for a revival of religion is natural; but the religion to be revived is not the right kind, nor is the revival sought of sufficient depth. The pervasion of man's whole being by the Eternal is what we need; minds renewed in the image of the Perfect mind, hearts under the perpetual spell of the things that are excellent, wills steady, and sure in the service of the Christian end of existence, God's kingdom and righteousness; these are our needs. The popular mind is debased by the evil custom of the world; the popular heart is wanting in

reverence, and in the morality that reverence alone can create and sustain ; the popular will is without character ; society as it lies open before us cries out for a revival of religion, but the religion needed is not the form of sound words, or the pious devices and subterfuges of professional revivalism, but man's soul made alive in the enduring sense of the living and Eternal God. For this end professional revivalism with its organizations, its staff of reporters who make the figures suit the hopes of good men, the system of advertisements, and the exclusion or suppression of all sound critical comment, the appeals to emotion and the use of means which have no visible connection with grace, and cannot by any possibility lead to glory, is utterly inadequate. The world awaits the vision, the passion, the simplicity, and the stern truthfulness of the Hebrew prophet ; it awaits the imperial breadth and moral energy of the Christian apostle to the nations ; it awaits the teacher who, like Christ, shall carry his doctrine in a great mind and in a great character.

I have spoken of the few elect souls, men and women, in our churches who are worthy to stand among the best of the Christian ages. What about the mass of church people? Are they not as fond of the polluted book, the play with its appeal to sensual passion, as their pagan neighbors? Who hears of their refusing to buy a cheap and repulsive sheet that costs a penny, that they may give support to a great but two-penny paper? Who ever heard them object to the poor dancing-girl on the stage, dancing her soul away to please low tastes? Who can report any revolt on their part over the shame of the city and the tradition of infamy that carries on its black tide thousands of youths to the pit? Do they not know every cheap and questionable book, every slimy play, every audacious device of the person who caters for pagans, every social function far removed from sanctity, every avenue of exclusiveness and pride, every black art of gossip, every twist and turn of the ropes of inhumanity, and do they not attend church and look for the coming of the



kingdom of God? What kind of revival will meet this case? Hysteria will not do, nor the devoutness of Lent, nor a turn at psychic healing, whether as patient or patron. What is demanded here is the axe laid at the root of the tree; the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; the renunciation of the devil and all his works, and the profound and sincere appeal to the Eternal God.

There are the professional architects of unity, and what a sad battalion they are! They seek to unify, in this sect or that, all the rival sects; they devise, cloud the issue, and sugar-coat the pill, hoping by diplomacy to make sure the coming of the kingdom of love. The unity that each sect seeks is the unity of the lamb inside the lion; and this is not the most pitiable aspect of the subject. The bases of unity are the supreme disgrace. They are the acknowledgment of this or that ancient creed which has become, in part at least, questionable, perhaps incredible; the acceptance of this or that ecclesiastical usage which

any congregation of rogues might agree to ; submission to some external authority, papal or episcopal, and the meek reception at their poor hands of one's birthright as a free child of God. Religion, the only thing worth uniting for, religion, a man's share, his growing share in the life of the Eternal, is seldom alluded to ; it is taken for granted, much in the same way as a bankrupt person might assume that he was a millionaire. Never since God's world of men began to run have ecclesiastics gathered men into unity ; what they have done has been to make the spiritual prison larger and pack it with a greater multitude. Never till the day of doom will true unity come except by the prophet of the Eternal beseeching all disciples of Jesus to retreat from their untenable assumptions, their foolish presumptions, their snobbery and quackery, their worldliness and inhumanity, back upon the life of God. Never till religion shall become profound and mighty, never till it shall become our chief joy, shall we unite in larger and larger groups ; never while

eccentricity is our chief gospel, pretense our chief delight, and worldliness our main pursuit, shall we be unified on any other ground than falsehood, or with any other sect than that of fools.

In the presence of infinitely deeper concerns, how slight appears to be our concern with miracle. When our anxiety is about the interior life and majesty of religion, we shall not trouble ourselves over the record of signs and wonders in which history discovers it. The enchantments of sense are not to be compared with the achievements of the soul of man as it lives in God. Outward things are shallow, one and all, till they become inward things; thought alone discovers depth and permanence. Science itself is shallow till it gives us, as in physics, a transformed cosmos, — a cosmos taken from the senses and given back, a less garish but an infinitely greater wonder, through the understanding. The religion of miracle, it must be confessed, is outward and shallow; religion becomes great only as it becomes an affair of the soul, con-

ceived and brought forth in the strength of the Eternal. The central debates, difficulties, interests, and hopes of religion are elsewhere than in miracle, and to a few of the more important of these I must now call attention in order and explicitness.

## II

The teacher of religion has on hand a real and not a mere academic contest. He is called not to undertake the defense of any historic system of theology such as that of Augustine, Calvin, or Edwards ; nor is it the preacher's business to protest against the attested results of modern Biblical scholarship ; nor is it his vocation to fight science on its own ground and in the service of its legitimate ends ; nor to give an unwarrantable significance to the debate over miracle ; it is his far greater task to meet current philosophic denials of his gospel, to do battle against the tremendous vital contradictions of his message, to deal with the fanaticism that turns sanity in faith out of doors, and to take into account the woes that

afflict organized Christianity to-day. Here are living foes, all the more formidable because sincere and sustained by reputable and sincere men. A rapid glance at the sad heart of our time, in its philosophic, vital, fanatical, and ecclesiastical contradictions of an eternal gospel, is now in order.

To-day the battle is raging round three distinct and opposite views of our human world. These views come mailed and panoplied in august philosophic idiom and technique; they are known as Pure Phenomenalism, Abstract or Transcendental Idealism, and Concrete Idealism, formidable names that cover ideas that are simple and easy of apprehension when translated into common language.

The first view, that of Pure Phenomenalism, regards our human world as a vagrant; it wanders lonely as a cloud with hardly a patch of light upon its back or a sunbeam thrust against its poor old ribs; it is detached, isolated, a dream, a delusion. The old empiricism issued in this conclusion inevitably, the

empiricism of Spencer, the Mills, Bentham, and the great perfecter of the old empiricism, David Hume. The new empirical idealism, an idealism of sentiment and imagination such as that set forth with so much charm of manner by Professor George Santayana,<sup>1</sup> arrives at the same goal. While built upon the crudest materialistic foundation, this philosophy of the literary man absolves our human world from all connection with permanence. That world exists for men ; and beyond men it has no meaning. Science, Art, and Religion are but the several phases of man's life ; infinite mystery is beneath and above and round about our world ; what it is for that Infinite, while logically beyond all computation, practically amounts to nothing. Here is a form of idealism that, while it labors in its own sentimental way to keep and to enjoy the world of human values, yet frankly confesses, now with pathos and again with disdain, that the world of man is fugitive and worthless. This form of idealism has not thus far been expressed with

<sup>1</sup> In his interesting book, *The Life of Reason*.

strength and thoroughness enough to make it formidable; but as it stands in current literature, it leads toward serious issues. It takes no uncommon insight to see how strong this foe of the worth of man's world might become. It involves belief in the primacy and the sovereignty of the material basis of existence; and of course belief in the incidental and evanescent character of the world of mind. It is a form of thought at variance with faith in the dignity of man and the presence in man of the Universal spirit. It is alien to the Christian philosophy of existence; all the more must it be watched because it recognizes sincerely an ideal humanity in the heart of the cosmos whose worth for the universe is nevertheless nothing. It is the prettiest, daintiest, and in its implications the deadliest, current form of materialism.

The second view, that of abstract and transcendental Idealism, has its strongest expression in Bradley's great book, "Appearance and Reality." This book is, however, only one of many attempts to find the uni-

verse through man ; attempts which find no consistent or permanent meaning in man's world. Here Bradley is but a nineteenth century Spinoza ; his book is a new version of an old philosophic tradition. We have nothing here to do with the process by which he and his followers attain their goal ; we take the result to which they come, and we protest against it in the name of our human world. When we hear that world described as an appearance of some grand abysmal reality, a messenger from some inaccessible, inscrutable, eternal sphinx, a bubble blown by something, no one knows what, floating in the path of time, gay, gorgeous, yet doomed to swift collapse, and when the collapse comes, leaving no trace of itself and its values anywhere, we protest. Our human world is our surest, as it is our most precious, possession ; and we cannot consent to the legitimacy of the process by which it is sublimated out of being into a form of existence that remains, and must forever remain to the unsophisticated intellect, a blank. Against the pure phenomenon and



the transcendental reality, against the world as a vagrant and the Absolute as a man-eater, genuine religion must always protest; and in these two current philosophic traditions, the Christian religion as the religion of the infinite worth of human beings must recognize the contradiction of its essential gospel. Naturalism is no foe to Christianity unless it is naturalism minus the presence of an ideal. The life of Christianity is in the ideal, and the realization of the ideal may well be exclusively in and through the natural order. Idealism is the friend of Christianity unless it becomes idealism minus the essential worth of man. Humanism is the profound friend of the gospel of Jesus unless it denies itself, cuts itself off from the Infinite, and sees the world of man as an unattached and incidental phenomenon in the heart of a cosmos inferior to itself.

The current movements in philosophy meet in one sad confession, the loss of faith in the permanent worth of man's world. Naturalism when it excludes the ideal and when it makes

the ideal dependent upon the process of nature ; idealism when it seeks reality beyond the order of human existence ; humanism when it fails to see any organic relation between man and the Eternal, chant the same dirge as together they dig the grave of all human things. The profoundest loss is here. Any number of writers and thinkers are sure in the vision and swift in the service of the higher humanities as such ; but when it comes to the universal and permanent significance of these higher humanities, these prophets fail. For them humanity at its best is an alien in the universe ; it has somehow forced its way into this show of time ; but it lives by the consent of its brute inferiors, and beyond its dependent existence there is nowhere any Supreme soul to whom its excellence might make a prevailing appeal, and who might save it with an everlasting salvation.

In the presence of this denial the question of miracle is childish. Such a question is at best on the circumference of the circle of faith ; the question of the permanent worth of

man is the centre of that circle. It is at this centre that the voice of the prophet should be heard to-day. In the perspective of difficulty he should stand here. The armies of the alien are massed at this point; they know the citadel of Christian faith, even if preachers of the Christian gospel do not know it. The universal loss of faith in the Infinite worth, the worth of God, of man and man's world, would mean the extinction of the essential soul of the gospel of Christ. With this conviction as to the perspective of the values of faith, it is only right that one should recall Christian men from the interests that are secondary to those that are deep as life. Fiddling while Rome is burning is an edifying occupation to none save to those who wish to see the Eternal City in ashes.

When we leave these interests of the intellect and enter the domain of the practical, the chief concerns take us into another and a far profounder world than that of miracle. There is the horror of moral defeat facing individuals and nations as a constant possibility, in many

cases as a fact. Here the moral life of man, the moral life in civilized communities, is at stake. Individuals are every day breaking down under the burden of sensual oppressions. Our morality seems to be so widely a question of etiquette and diplomacy; we appear to be on the borders of a vast inundation of vice. Moral despair is creeping into the heart of the few brave idealists; they are asking if it is worth their while to resist the devil at their gate when the other gates of the city are not only open, but festooned with welcome to his Satanic majesty. The daily press gives the obituaries of the natural man; the death of the soul, of multitudes of souls, is not listed. The idle talk about orthodoxies and heterodoxies becomes a mean blasphemy in the presence of this death of the ideal, this surrender to the brute that is daily going on among living and suffering men.

When we look out upon the business world, we see again the world of Ishmael. The hand of man is against man; in capital we have the conscienceless corporation atoning for its out-

rages upon humanity by its gifts to education and religion; in labor we see brute fury violating law, denying the freedom of workmen, organizing a tyranny more terrible than modern society has ever known, excusing itself on the ground that there is no other way to gain its rights and to contribute to the well-being of the people. Where in this dismal outlook is there any sign of brotherhood, any hint of victorious moral life? While one's sympathies must go with labor, because of its nameless sufferings in the past, and because of its hard lot under any possible combination of circumstances; while one must look with concern upon the associated wealth of the land because it is so often pitiless as it runs the vast treadmill in which human beings pass their sorrowful years, yet the inclusive outlook leaves the impression that between associated capital and associated labor there is little to choose. The old economy rules in both camps; the separation of morality and business, though the devil himself could not make it complete, is still tragically widespread.

The chief concern of the business world as one looks at it truly, both in its association of capital and of labor, is not character, is not human worth, is not the kingdom of love, but money. Here is an approximation to the brute struggle for existence of appalling magnitude ; here is practical materialism on a scale and with a passionate intensity that in comparison turns the philosophic article into moonshine.

The leading nations of the earth in no way relieve the gloom of this outlook; they add to it a darkness all their own. Here are Christian Britain and Christian Germany in deadly feud, each intrinsically afraid of the other, yet each waiting for a chance to spring at the throat of the other. For what cause? Because Britain has the sovereignty of the sea and fears she may lose it, because Germany wants that sovereignty and hopes some day to win it. The whole feud is an economic feud ; it has its source in the brute life of both nations ; it is the most ruthless exposure of the hollowness of the moral life among both peoples. No single human goal, no distinctly human interest, no

conceivable end of morality or religion, justifies this irrational and savage hostility.

But the vision must be extended so as to include the sin, the ignorance, the capacity to believe a lie, the incapacity to profit by experience, in short, the moral tragedy of mankind. The vision of sin and death still rises out of the world's heart; and the preacher of religion who averts his sight from this woe for the sake of some idle debate of a purely academic nature would seem sadly mistaken in his conception of man's supreme need and God's answer in Christ to that need.

Mention must next be made of another subtle foe of sound religion, the new belief in religion as magic, as a therapeutic agent of miraculous power. This new cult assumes many forms. In one form it calls upon us to deny the existence of evil, to ignore disease and pain, to believe that thought has the power of absolution. Here, of course, there is no regard for the fixed conditions of mortal life, no sense of the determinations of the Eternal thought in which men are held, no concern for facts,

no sense of law, nothing but the riot of fancy, the play of childish self-will, the lunacy of irrational ecstasy. Religion as a value in itself is here lost. It is a means to an end ; it exists chiefly as the servant of the body ; it is good because it issues in freedom from disease and pain, because it imparts comfort and efficiency to the physical organism. Doubtless these ends are good, but they do not rise into the sphere of true religion. Hitherto the chief business of religion has been with the character, the state of the heart, the soul ; and in the great days of religion, men living in its power have been concerned mainly with the moral and spiritual conditions of the community. When religion and rationality part company, religion sinks to an agent in the service of the physical organism. A generation of this way of regarding religion would go far to reduce it to an incidental place among the interests of normal human beings.

The healing cult that is annexing itself to the office of the preacher has its peril here. Its evil tendency is evident in two ways : it



looks at human beings from the wrong side, and it turns the commonplaces of psychic power over the body into magic. The human person should continue to be, at least for the preacher of Christianity, essentially a spiritual being, one whose most serious concerns are those of character. The claims put forward in behalf of psychic healing are in favor of an inferior interest, and they are in general wild exaggerations. When one sees whole bodies of apparently sensible human beings carried away by the Christian Science craze or the psychic healing infatuation, one wonders if religion and soul, religion and sanity, religion and the sovereignty of moral ends, have forever parted company.

The philosophy underlying these crude and sad movements may seem at first glance to be the sovereignty of spirit. A longer and deeper gaze forbids this complimentary conclusion. For what is spirit? Is it not moral will, true thought done into life through will? Is not spirit defined by its ends? Is not its deepest trait worth? Mere immateriality is not a suffi-

cient account of spirit ; God as a spirit is not properly described as an incorporeal being, but as Infinite love. Now in the two forms of magic to which I have referred, the life of the body is the main interest. The soul has its chief value as the servant of the body ; the worth of the higher life is the comfort it can bestow on the lower. And here one wonders whether, if this had been primitive Christianity, there would have been a cross at its heart, whether the Divine youth with whom it originated would have thrown his life away, whether his chief apostle would have carried the Christian message through an empire in spite of his thorn in the flesh, whether Christianity would have bred men and women who counted not their temporal life dear to them, that they might do the will of God ? So far as there is any philosophy underlying these pathetic movements, it would seem to be the sovereignty of the body and the subordination of the soul.

The deepest aspect of these frantic uses of religion is the malady they reveal ; they are a symptom of unbelief in spirit. Essential

materialism and incidental spiritual existence would seem to express their inner meaning. And it is here that they become signs of the times. Materialism is dead as a theory of the universe, because there is for science no such thing as matter according to the older conception of it. But materialism as a condition of human life is universally recognized ; physiological science has made this condition clear and impressive ; the physical organism, especially the brain, has assumed a new importance in the life of man. So much attention has been devoted to the physical side of human existence that it has gradually assumed the place of chief concern. Materialism, practical and vital, is in the air ; old beliefs are falling away in consequence ; and spirit itself has become dependent and incidental. The old comparison of the soul in its relation to the body as the harmony to the harp gave better results. Though dependent upon the harp, though existence after the harp was destroyed was impossible, yet the harmony while it lasted was a value in itself, and testified to a whole world

of super-material values. Here we are brought face to face with another sign of the times. Religion as such seems to have few friends ; few have anything to say for the soul as a value in itself, and for God as the object, the life and joy of the human spirit.

To these adversaries of faith in an eternal gospel, by which I mean good tidings for this world and all worlds and good tidings chiefly for the ethical person, there must be added the warfare of the sects. The Roman Church will recognize no other ; religion in the profound and saving sense is still in the keeping of its priesthood ; Christ has but one authentic representative in this world, and that representative is the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Here comes in the Episcopal Church, Anglican and American, claiming to be the church, chiefly regarding the Roman communion as given over to superstition, and emphatically setting at naught other organizations of Christian men and women. The Methodist appears, democratic and zealous as ever, but sadly entangled in obsolete ideas and ecclesiastical

jobbery ; the Baptist cannot surrender a mere form even for the sake of the Eternal Spirit ; the Presbyterian and the Congregationalist still contend for one phase of the world's thought as the whole and the final truth, and outlaw one another on this basis. Here is the solemn and crying disgrace of the Christian faith : its interests are trivial, its spirit is inhuman ; the methods of its warfare are carnal ; its snobbery, bigotry, and barbarism are a sad sight. In the presence of this exhibit, is there any wonder that the churches should have so slight a hold upon the people of the land ? As they stand, they have no right to empire ; they are not clear and earnest enough in intellect, nor are they high enough in character, to deserve empire. It is a calamity when inferior persons exercise authority ; and this calamity is not reduced when these inferior persons are labeled religious. If the churches of America would exercise power over the national life, they must first rise in intellect and in character ; serious, informed intellect and high character are the ultimate sources of power ; and our

Christian religion is a Divine tradition, but a tradition only till it operates in a clear and sound mind and declares its spirit in a great character. Only so much Christian truth as is lodged in character is quick capital in the sphere of moral service.

Authority and influence are in general very different things; authority is mainly in the office, in the institution, and in the law of the institution, whereas influence is in the man, in his intellect and character. It is true that we speak of the authority of the specialist, the decisive and final word of the man who knows, and this usage is not now called in question. The point here made is that authority does not always imply worth; it is usually, in the sphere of faith, a term of compulsion, a word signifying the application of force, a power to silence and to drive. The Protestant churches have entirely lost whatever of this undesirable inheritance they may at one time have possessed. Their hope is in influence, intellectual and moral; and nothing can give them this influence but great minds and true hearts. Ed-

ucated and free communities are not to be moulded in the highest things by the incompetent intellect, even when warmed by the good heart; nor will they follow the godless and heartless thinker who deals with religion; they demand the superior mind and the superior human being, and in him alone they confess the sovereignty of influence.

### III

In the final book of the New Testament we read of an angel flying in mid-heaven proclaiming an eternal gospel to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. That eternal gospel contained these things: God and the glory that is his due as the Infinite excellence; God's judgment in this world; the worship of God as the Lord and Giver of life, and as the most worthy Judge Eternal.

Is there any chance for this angel to fly in mid-heaven to-day, and if he may fly, will he still have an eternal gospel to declare? We may not be altogether satisfied with his former

exposition of his eternal gospel ; we may believe that in his first flight he was in too great haste to lay open to the heart his announcement of abiding good tidings ; we may hope that in his second flight his account of his message may be richer and closer to the need of our troubled age. There can be no doubt that this messenger and his message touch our life in its profoundest need ; there can be no question that when he speaks again and speaks in the idiom of our time, he must be richer in detail and more explicit than he was of old.

When troubled over the changing aspects of our historic Christian faith, it is good to strip that faith bare and to look at it in its naked majesty. Our whole human world is summed up in persons ; souls in the presence and life of the Infinite soul ; that is the ultimate reality of our universe. Our faith is the vision of Jesus concerning the meaning of this universe, his insight set in the authority of his character, and filled with the glory of his passion. This is the permanent centre of our Christian faith ; this is our Christianity



as we shall hold it in the invisible world. In that invisible world the Bible, our dearest treasure here, will be absent ; there will be no church there, no temporal ritual, sect, creed ; no sacrament like Baptism and the Lord's Supper ; no miracle, no division of life into sacred and secular. " The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." <sup>1</sup> The temporal world is for a temporal end ; when that end is served, that order has done its work ; when the individual ceases to exist in that order, it ceases to have further meaning for him. The serious question concerns not the temporal order, but the Eternal Spirit who meets man in it, and who educates man through it ; the profoundest interest centres not in what is bound to pass away, but in that which cannot pass away. Our Christian faith, considered *sub specie aeternitatis*, sums itself up in these great simplicities : the object of faith, — God ; the

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lx, 19.

monumental teacher of this faith, — Jesus Christ; the fellowship of it, — the souls of believers; the service which it inspires, — obedience in any one of countless forms, in countless diverse situations, to the Eternal good will; the endless worth of personal being, of personal being as love in action, as love in possibility.

It goes without saying that a religion for eternity is not necessarily suited, in all respects, to a being in time. We need elements of faith in this temporal order not needed in that eternal order. Thus church, creed, ritual, sacrament, and the great Bible come back, as elements of power and necessity in our present distress. Still the clear sense of the temporal nature of these elements of our faith liberates the spirit from too much dependence upon them, imparts steadiness amid the changes that inevitably go with them, and leads to a wise and happy perspective of values. In our faith we find two sets of values, the temporal and the eternal; therefore that cannot be of supreme concern which dies with time; that

must be our sovereign interest which lasts forever.

An acute and learned writer has recently published a book with this attractive title, "The Eternal Values."<sup>1</sup> If this book shall keep to the heart the promise that it makes to the ear, here surely men will find rest to their minds. But just here is our difficulty with this elaborate and interesting production. While it contains an admirable account of the values of perception, logical connection, our fellow-world, and the world of art, it brings no authentic tidings of eternal values for man. There is in the final pages of the book the dim emergence of an Absolute for whom our human values may have an eternal value, but for that Absolute we men as such are of only temporal value.

The author of this book is fond of titles that imply the dignity of the higher aspects of our human world; it is a grief to be obliged to add that, as he employs them, that dignity is vain. Eternal ideals, eternal values,

<sup>1</sup> Professor Münsterberg.

what do these fine words mean? Ideals are the visualized expectations, the images that embody desire and hope, the desire and hope of persons. These images may be of economic good, scientific, artistic, political, philosophic, religious; whatever the ends may be which these visions represent, their length of days is strictly dependent on the length of days of the persons, or the race of persons, that entertain them. An eternal ideal as the vision or product of a temporal race is eternal nonsense. The same is true of values. Values are such to rational beings; they may be as numerous as are the interests of man; they may be sensuous, conceptual, domestic, national, racial, universal; but whatever their worth may be, that worth ceases when the persons or the races of persons for whom they have worth become extinct. Eternal ideals and eternal values as the possession or production of a temporal race are manifest impossibilities. It is almost needless to say that eternal ideals and values belong only to spiritual beings who last forever; and if the Absolute alone lasts

forever, he alone is in possession of eternal ideals and values. With all due respect to this Absolute for whom everything exists that does exist, and in whose presence nothing that lives is of any account for itself, the chief concern of human beings is with human ideals and values. To call us to the study of Eternal Ideals and Eternal Values and then to tell us in our high-raised expectations that these ideals and values are not for us, is to give us a scorpion for an egg, to keep the promise of infinite good to the ear and to break it to the mind. If man's world is wholly temporal, let it be so described; if man ceases to be as a person at death, again let us hear our sentence in plain words. In the presence of fate we shall resolve with Nicias and his army, "We shall do what men may and bear what men must." But on no account let us juggle with words; let us not dream that we discover eternal ideals and values for men when the race of men is a mere incident in the endless evolutions of the cosmos. And if we think that men should be willing to be damned for

the glory of the Absolute, let us beware lest our Absolute, in making this requisition upon moral beings, turn out to be not the Infinite Perfection, but the Infinite Cannibal, not the God and Father whose tender mercies are over all his works, but the devil that is the slanderer, the enemy of man.

An eternal gospel identifies the being of man as spirit and the being of God. In such a gospel we do not have two sets of ideals and two sets of values; we have one order for God and man, with this difference, that while this order of ideals and values in the case of God is immediate and complete, it dawns upon man through the atmosphere of the temporal world, and lives among its fires and storms. The essential kinship of God and man is the heart of the Christian faith; without this essential and endless kinship, eternal good tidings for man there can be none. With this fundamental assurance that in virtue of thought, moral accountability, and responsible action, there is essential identity of being between God and man, we have still eternal good tidings to pro-

claim to mankind. For then the whole contrast of the Infinite to the finite, the Perfect to the imperfect, the Universal Spirit to the individual human being, is but the contrast of the Eternal Father to his child in time; the contrast is all in our interest. Because his thoughts are not our thoughts, because his ways are not our ways, because as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts and ways higher than ours, therefore we are the more able to believe the call, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." <sup>1</sup> When we pray, "Our Father who art in heaven," we claim kinship with the Eternal Spirit, we set that kinship in the heart of infinite contrast; yet this contrast is all in our favor. It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not; they are new every morning and fresh every evening. The identity of man with God is supported by an infi-

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lv, 7.

nite contrast of wisdom and power and compassion.

Our human world is our supreme concern; life in that world is either a permanent possible or a permanent actual value. The quality possessed by the finest spirits is a value for all moral beings in all worlds. The conceptions in which the philosophy of Socrates consisted have long ago been transcended; they were transcended by Plato, his chief disciple, and still further by Plato's great disciple; but Socrates confronting death with the cup of hemlock in his hand, as depicted in the closing chapter of the "Phædo," has never been transcended and never will be. The history of his people and the philosophy of that history given by Stephen, his insight into the genius of the new religion and his apology for it, have been transcended; but the spirit that went up to God through the shower of stones that ended his life — "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" — has never been transcended, and again, it will never be. Fortitude, moral serenity, magnanimity, and devotion to the highest, when they appear in a



human person, are seen at once to be values for all men in all time, and for the universe, if it is noble enough to care for such things. These values in the highest spirits become ideals for the rest; values and ideals alike are both human and eternal, if man and God care for the best things.

With this insight into life gained from supreme spirits we note at once that human relationships are moral to the core. The animal ends are to be held in control by ends of justice and mercy; the forms in which human beings associate, economic, domestic, political, scientific, artistic, philosophic, are in their final meaning ethical; they have their deepest significance as an organism for the development and expression of eternal moral values.

This brings us to our accountability to God; and here we see the ground of a living and potent religion, a living and potent humanity. Religion lives in the vision of God; man lives in the religion that is the vision and service of God, the God with whom he is at heart one, in whose spirit his spirit is to be cleansed and

perfected. The Christian religion is the vision of God in Jesus Christ, the vision of man as the child of God in the same Teacher; the revelation through him that the meaning of existence is moral; that goodness in human beings and the possibility of it are values for the universe; that the life of our kind follows an order of ideals and values identical with that followed by the Eternal Spirit, because at heart he and we are one.

## IV

Several times I have said in this discussion that our chief difficulties in religion are to be solved by profounder living in God. Questions of scholarship are important and at the same time secondary; questions in the philosophy of religion go much deeper, yet there is a depth below them; for the philosophy of religion is the rational account of religion as fact, as life and power. In religion itself there is a synthesis of the highest powers in man, insight, feeling, will; this synthesis generates a special experience, and this special experience is the

sovereign thing in the history of the race. To-day one meets the denial of the moral ideal; and the question comes, How shall that denial be met? It may be met by argument and by life, but life alone is the conclusive answer. We may point to Socrates, Luther, Lincoln, to the great as they have given a new turn to human history; or we may look into the moral life of good men in all history. We find men living in a system of relationships; out of these relationships have come ideals. There is no fact better attested in the history of man than the presence of the ideal in morally awakened human beings. And this ideal is the sign of the complete human existence as that is understood by each idealist. Whether the lower animals form and entertain ideals, we do not know; whether there is in them anything higher than images of gratified appetite, we may not be prepared to say; but in men, when morally awakened, there is the hunger for the perfect life in God, the need that expresses itself in the old words, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."

The moral ideal is admitted, but it is said that it is without influence. Biology is not amenable to thought; organic processes are inevitable, and go their way careless of the moral ideal. Hunger, thirst, the reproductive instinct, the circulation of the blood, the changes in the nerve centres and in the brain, in fact, all the main processes of physiology and biology, are independent of thought, and moral ideals and resolves are powerless in their presence. This is the deepest denial in our time, the frankest and the most audacious confession of the sovereignty of the lower in man and in the universe over the higher. At the same time it is, for the morally unawakened, the hardest foe to meet and vanquish. For them there is little or none of that great special experience to which such a denial is idle chatter.

This deepest and saddest denial of our time must be met by argument, and yet more by the witness of experience. Hunger and thirst are organic processes; no man by thought can arrest or diminish these desires; but all decent human beings control them through civilized

thought. The denial is perhaps leveled more directly at the sex instinct than at any other organic force in human nature. Here let appeal be taken to chaste youth, and the power of thought over biological processes will become evident. Every morally awakened young man who has faced his animal inheritance in the strength of his rational possessions, who has looked upon his passions growing into a group of wild beasts, and who has resolved to tame these beasts, can refute the denial in question. He knows that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he; he knows with the Greek Aristotle that desire originates through thought;<sup>1</sup> that physical discomfort in the organism cannot become definite and inflamed desire till taken up and shaped by thought; that upon the reproductive instinct adverse thought has an immediate influence; that this style of thought maintained penetrates to the inmost processes of the organism and fixes there a real and wholesome dominion. And when this thought adverse to the sovereignty of the sex

<sup>1</sup> *Meta.* B. 11, 7.

instinct expresses itself in games, in a variety of intellectual interests, in any one of a large number of possible ambitions, economic, artistic, scientific, philanthropic; above all, when it utters itself in definite moral service, it attains to a substantial mastery of the soul. Indeed, in the presence of the force that oftener runs wild than any other in human nature, it should be said that no instinct in man is more susceptible of transformation and right direction. That human beings so often fail here marks weakness, but not incapacity for strength; and on the other hand, the jubilant moral life of youth redeemed through thought brings in the overwhelming answer to the pathetic denial of ideal power.

So much is certainly sound in the mental healing craze, that right thinking has a decided influence upon the functions of the body. There is perhaps hardly an organ in the body whose condition and operation are not subject to the power of the mind; and till degeneration becomes decided, the intelligence is a co-efficient in the production of health. Even in dis-

ease, the mind is capable of abstraction; it is able in no small measure to ignore and transcend the reports and agitations that pour in from the distressed physical organism; it is strong enough, as in the case of the late Professor Mulford, or W. Robertson Smith,<sup>1</sup> to discuss the sentence of death by an incurable disease, then to dismiss it and turn to the old paths of thought.

The denial of the influence of the moral ideal over conduct, and still more over the currents of the soul, has a pathetic genesis. It finds its primary suggestion, perhaps, in the study of nervous pathology; this suggestion is forced into the mind of the student by the observed influence of the body upon the intelligence; here is apt to follow the hasty generalization that all thought is the mere incidence of organic processes in the brain, a world created by material conditions, shunted off by itself for a while, possessing splendors and glooms of its own, but always the creature, and finally the victim, of brute matter.

<sup>1</sup> J. Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, p. 325.

This state of mind is further confirmed, in many cases, by the absence of full opportunity for action. By itself the intellectual life is not enough ; it leads astray when left to itself. Fichte delivered himself from the dominion of physical necessity by the power of thought ; he delivered himself from the impotence of thought by the moral will. Action is the final revelation of reality ; and lives spent exclusively in thought inevitably fall into despair over its worth. Amiel is optimist and pessimist, agnostic, atheist, theist ; Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist ; in short, he is everything by turns, because he is so little at home in the world of moral service. When one's inmost thought is this : " I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day ; the night cometh in which no man can work," his thought is put to the test, and in the moral test attains to moral reality.

Still further, the pathetic denial of the influence of the ideal comes from the confusion of the ideal with a mere sentimental dream. It is from sentimental writers that we hear



most about the ideal; serious ethical writers have adopted their fine word, but it must never be forgotten that different meanings are attached to it by the two classes of thinkers. For the sentimentalist the ideal is a mental picture and no more; for the ethical thinker it is the voice of conscience in the imagination. To one man the ideal is only an image, beautiful but impotent, like the dream of a love-sick youth over the girl who has chosen another than himself; to the other the ideal is duty rising in splendor through the atmosphere of the imagination. Mere sentiment is surely the nearest to impotence of any of the experiences of mortal men, and for any person who tries to meet the stern and tremendous forces of the lower life with nothing stronger than the weapons of the sentimentalist, there can be but one issue. The appeal is, after all, to life. Every man has the chance to answer for himself the statement that the ideal is impotent. He may meet that statement in the awe and joy of a manhood controlled out of the ideal, standing in the great process of moral trans-

formation, sure of growth, sure of the forces that have brought it and that promise more. And this personal experience of victory over passion in the strength of the ideal he will broaden into the great tradition of the supreme moral idealists. He will recall Jesus and his sovereign idealism ; he will not forget the idealism of the Hebrew prophets ; of Paul, Augustine, and Luther ; of the company that no man can number, who out of weakness were made strong, who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the power of the ideal. He will conclude that the denial of religion is never so easy of refutation as when it contests the reality of the life of man in God.

It is said that religion is a tangle of errors and superstitions ; therefore it is for the uneducated. This charge must be laid to heart. But so far as it is true, the same may be said of every human interest. There is no single human interest in an ideal condition. Even science runs wild, and on the pin-point of evidence tries to balance the universe of truth.

Art is beset behind and before with fads and superstitions. Philosophy is sane only now and then; and among its devotees wisdom and the love of it are often sadly left out of the account. Politics as a science and still more as an art is in dire confusion; the domestic life of man, his deepest life as a creature of time, is in wild disorder. What is to be done? Are we to abandon all the interests of the scholar, the scientist, the artist, the man of the world, and the man of speculation, because confusion reigns everywhere? By no means; these interests are the life of our human world, and we will work together to put them in better order. Some day, a thousand years hence, perhaps, our effort to improve things will be represented in an approximation to the ideal condition on the part of all these interests.

Precisely so we reason about religion. Truth and error are sadly mixed in it; reality and unreality, substance and superstition, are too often rolled into one mass, and we are invited to accept this total as from the Highest. Still further, there is often little perspective of val-

ues in modern religion. What then? Shall we abandon this sovereign human interest to the inferior intellect and the incompetent? By no means; we will struggle together to separate the wheat from the chaff, the substance from the ugly superstition that clings to it; we will strive to bequeath to our children the purer and the greater religion, hoping that finally, when the temple of God in man is complete, our poor endeavor will be represented and honored there.

It is said that man is not made in the image of God; that God is made in the image of man. Here it is true that we make God in our image; we can understand God only through the forms of human intelligence. But this is no reason for the denial that man is made in the image of God. Surely man owes his being to the universe; he has been made a person, a thinker, and a responsible doer in this world; since nowhere within sight is there any pattern according to which his being has been shaped, is it unreasonable to infer that the archetype of the moral being of man is the

moral being of God? An antecedent man must have, an antecedent adequate to account for him; and is there any better hypothesis here than the statement of religious faith that the highest in this world is made in the image of the Highest in the universe? We confess at once that we make God in the image of man, and we contend that we are able to do this because God made man in the image of himself as the supreme thinker and doer, the archetypal moral being.

But here again the answer of thought should be supplemented by the answer of life. That God is a mere idealization imposed upon the universe by man is refuted in the great trial of the soul. "I saw the Lord," said Isaiah; "I have seen God face to face," said another. Moral life is in the strength of the ideal, and the ideal leads to him who is the sum of all our ideals and infinitely more. In the process of moral life the soul meets God as its light and salvation; here it grasps the Infinite other of itself; and when distress is at its deepest, its cry is, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust

in him." When the cup is the cup of woe and death, it is here chosen because it is his will. In the great process of the moral life God is the immediate and sure possession of the soul. The religious man, whose religion has become a profound and victorious life, cries, "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me." Whether it be Paul that utters that cry, or Cromwell weeping over the son dead in battle, or any soul anywhere, high or humble, the fact is the same. In the utmost life of man God stands revealed as man's Deliverer and Father.

The confidence of reason is great; the confidence of personal experience in the moral process of existence is greater. Our thoughts are imperfect; in the possessions of the heart and in the perpetually renewed service of the ideal we find our chief peace. There is such a thing in the world to-day as the secret of the Lord, and it is with them who in awe and love wait upon him. Covenants with God are still made, and when made in tears and blood, they

stand fast. The profounder life in God turns either into agents of intellectual discipline or things childish, current denials of the realities of faith. Religious men are moved by them only as shallow seas are by winds; religious men are ineffective in meeting these denials because their life in God is wanting in depth and peace.

## V

Books on the philosophy of religion multiply, and many of them are serious contributions to thought: still, it must be said of the greater number of them that what one misses in them is a profound religious consciousness. The greater number of these books seem to be a philosophy of other men's religion, imperfectly appreciated, and by writers who have little or no religion themselves. Aristotle is to be admired on many counts; he is to be admired especially because, having no religion himself, he did not treat of the philosophy of religion. This great master of thought confined himself to those departments of human

experience in which he had a profound share. He knew well that without the rich and unusual experience there cannot come into existence the mature and adequate philosophy. The indictment to be brought against much that calls itself a philosophy of religion is that it is without first-hand and profound knowledge of religion ; that it is mainly an endeavor, and it must be added a poor endeavor, to account for the religion of other people.

Before we can advance wisely in this discipline, we need a profounder religious consciousness. Indeed, the religious consciousness carries with it its philosophy ; the Eternal is its dwelling-place ; it has only to make explicit what is already implicit and part of its life. In the interest of thought, still more in the interest of man, the call must be to a new and a deeper life in God. Men must cease to play with the moral ideal ; they must boast about it no longer as the high possession of the soul ; they must break up the habit of gossip concerning its subjectivity ; they must translate it into duty with the sanction of the Eternal in it.



Religion takes its own way in the service of the soul. It goes out in a great order of experimentation. It takes this current dogma of the subjectivity of all our thoughts and it puts it to the test of life. There it breaks down; there the objectivity of thought finds its vindication. In and through the process of moral life men find that their best thoughts are valid for all moods, for all days and years, and that when sincerely adopted they bring a similar freedom and peace to all men. The universal and the permanent is the true objective; what holds good for all men all the time may well be held as carrying in it the sanction of God. The religious man is driven to this conclusion. He takes his best thoughts, lifts them to God; there he sees them filled with God's sanction and sent back from him invested with the authority of his truth. For the believer in God there must be an order of God for human life; this order is to be found through the severest experimentation; when from this experimentation the valid thoughts emerge, they stand forth as the will of God for man. In one way

or another the religious man must escape from the circle of mere subjectivity. That circle is a circle of death; it is the spiritual whirlpool of serious and thoughtful men to-day. Here, as I have said, is one way of escape: the way of the spirit is experimentation; the universally and permanently valid for the best life of the moral person is the objective; in that objective the soul rests in the Divine will.

The sense of sin must return. To-day it lives chiefly in ancient hymns and liturgies. The reason of all this lies in the shallowness of the moral and religious sense. The moral ideal is a sublime picture, and as such it is to be admired and talked about; so much the devil of mere subjectivity enjoins. The moral ideal appears in the wintry atmosphere of lives conformed to the evil custom of the world, appears there pale and feeble, and a word of thankfulness for its relieving glow seems to be all that is demanded by the situation. When the moral ideal appears as the face and eyes of God, reading the secret shame of man's heart, sending home the conviction of his mis-

taken and perverse ways, revealing the utter falsehood and hollowness of his life, bringing him into the presence of the Eternal honor and keeping him there in moral torture, like one of old he will cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."<sup>1</sup> Religion cannot long endure when conscience has been dismissed; the recall and reinvestment of conscience is an essential condition of the return of profound and true religion. Of old, the secret of the Lord was with them that feared him; to-day, it has gone with the Pharisee and the impenitent thief. It was otherwise in times when religion was great: —

The path of the righteous is as the shining light,  
That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.<sup>2</sup>

It was otherwise when religion began in a great moral revolution: God, be merciful to me a sinner; I was not disobedient to the

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah vi, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs iv, 18.

heavenly vision; behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by extortion, I restore him fourfold; except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

On the basis of the moral ideal as the image of the moral will of God for man, in awe and tears, religion begins and goes on in the power of a new life. Vision, prayer, fellowship, service, struggle, and victory are the great notes of that new existence. It is this new existence in individuals, in churches, in vast bodies of men, that is to-day our deepest need. The chemist without food dies like his ignorant brother, and the philosopher of religion is an even more pitiable sight than the multitude for whom there is no open vision. The more and more adequate account of religion is the work of gifted minds in the long succession of the ages; meanwhile we are here to-day and to-morrow we are gone. Is there nothing for us on our swift race through time, nothing but the

accounts of religion which men give who have at best only a pathetic share in its wondrous life and power? Is there for us no Eternal God in whom to put our whole trust as we stand at the task of moral persons, and in the labor and sorrow of time? Are the vision, the self-abasement, the self-surrender, and the rapture of religion forbidden to us, and the service that in its might becomes a song? Religious men know that it is otherwise; they have sat at the feet of the great; they have entered forever the school of Christ as disciples there; they are in the conduct of a solemn personal experimentation in the things of the soul; they know that their Redeemer liveth; their God is their glory.

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